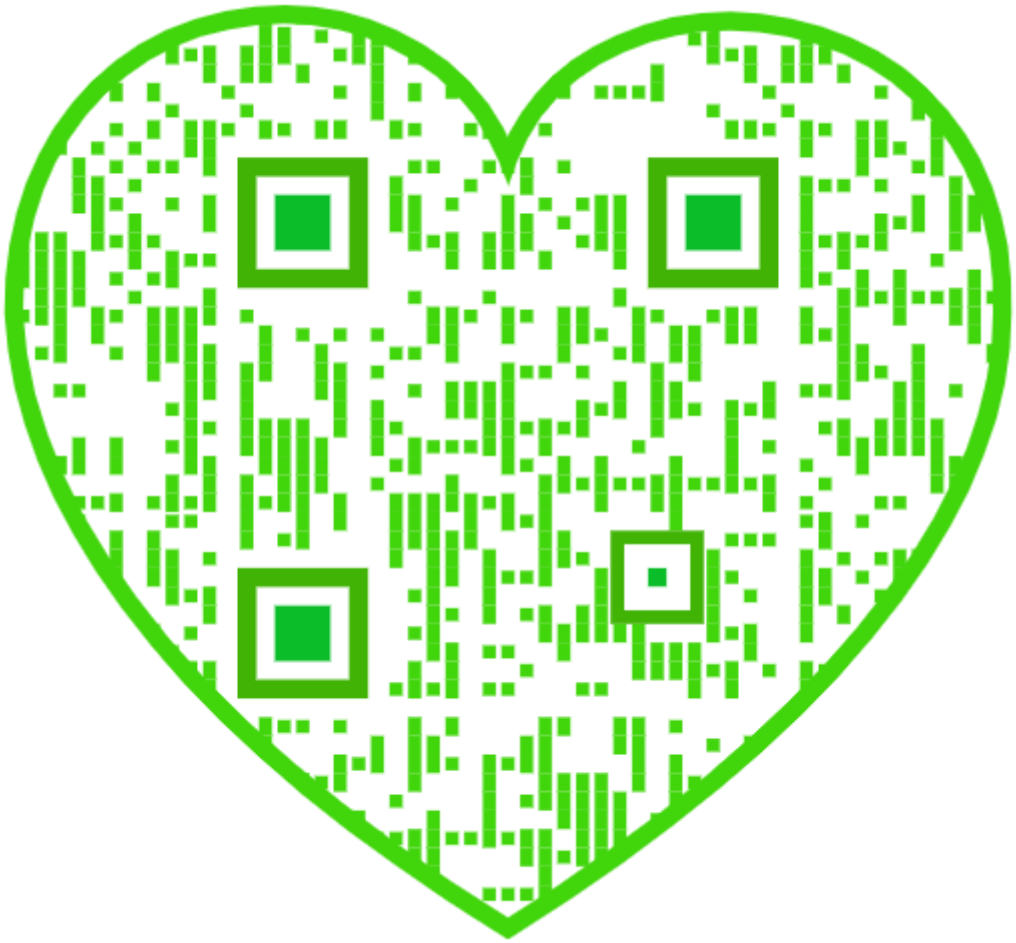

FOSTER'S

# Common Sense in Whist

BY THE AUTHOR OF

Foster's Whist Manual; Foster's Complete Hoyle;
Foster's Whist Tactics, etc.

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1898
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HENRY MORSE STEPHENS

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# Notice to Subscribers.

This is the first edition of a work which is intended to be a whist-players' annual, something on the plan of the books issued for the benefit of amateur photographers, giving the results of experience and investigation up to date. Next year the work will be entirely rewritten, and will embody such modifications as may be suggested by the practical experience of those who shall try the tactics outlined in the present work, and will send to the author their criticisms on the various elements of strategy herein touched upon.

Only one thousand copies of this edition will be printed, and they will be sold entirely by subscription, $1 a copy, which should be sent directly to the publisher, R. F. Foster, 560 Hancock Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Post-office orders should be made payable to substation No. 26, Brooklyn.

# Preface.

The literature of whist, up to the present time, is an accumulation of individual theories, advanced by different authors at various periods, and most of these theories are simply guesses at the truth, without any attempt to demonstrate their foundation in fact.

The author believes that the time is ripe for a book which shall deal with facts instead of theories, and which, instead of laying down certain rules to be blindly followed, although they may fit only about one hand in ten, will show that every hand is a problem in itself, the solution to which must depend on the player's knowledge of probabilities and the exercise of his common sense, not on his belief in any particular theory.

The curse of the modern player is that he is tied down by his adherence to some conventional system, which continually hampers him in his movements and prevents him from stepping aside to gather the tricks which lie in regions apart from the route mapped out for him by his system. In the following

pages an attempt is made to show that the elements of success in whist are not in the selection of an ironclad system, but in the proper understanding of the uses and powers of the materials in the player's hands, and that whist can be played without resorting to artificial conventions of any kind.

There is no situation at the whist table which is not governed by certain principles of play, and if a person is not sufficiently skillful to recognize the position or to select the principle which should apply, he is certainly not a good player, and no amount of direction, artificially conveyed to him by his partner, will ever make him one, but will simply confirm him in his mediocrity. He will always remain a pot-hunter, who cannot find the game and will not shoot until it is driven under his nose. Under such conditions, all the spirit of the sportsman is suppressed, and all the pleasures of the chase are gone.

Unfortunately, the very common impression has gone abroad that the common-sense game is a continual hunt for a cross-ruff, and that the original leads are confined to short suits and singletons. Any system of play which has such a theory as a basis is a fallacy, because its success is against probability, the conditions favorable for a cross-ruff being the exception and not the rule.

The system which is outlined in this work is a complete departure from any of the methods so far published, all of which are founded upon the use of certain arbitrary conventions, the meaning of which must be previously agreed upon between the partners. The present work is based upon the principle of giving the student a model hand, an ideal or standard of perfection in position, which he should strive to approach as closely as possible himself, and should endeavor to prevent the adversaries from securing. With this ideal before him, he has a guiding principle of play, which remains constant in all sorts and conditions of hands, enabling him instantly to recognize their merits or defects and to demonstrate them to his partner, thus securing the most perfect harmony in the advance toward a common goal.

# Introduction.

The plan of the following work is comparatively simple. It proceeds upon the logical principle that we should first ascertain facts and then reason upon them.

The object in all whist play is to win tricks. The majority of these tricks are won with certain high cards under certain conditions; but as the conditions change the trick-taking powers of these cards must change with them. Until the exact conditions in any given hand are ascertained, one must play on the assumption that the most common or probable condition is the one that exists, because he will be right in the majority of cases, although in some he will be entirely wrong.

The facts to be ascertained then, are what cards win the majority of the tricks and under what conditions, so that these conditions being recognized by the players they may so manœuvre as to secure the best results with the trick-taking cards which their hands contain. In some hands, even under favorable conditions, they will not succeed in getting

the tricks which they are entitled to expect, while in others they will succeed in spite of the conditions turning out to be decidedly against them. They must be satisfied if, in the majority of cases, they derive an advantage from playing always in accordance with probability, and they should not be discouraged by an occasional reverse, however serious.

The facts presented in the following pages are those which are true of the game as it is played to-day, and the author wishes it distinctly understood that he does not present them as final or conclusive, because they simply represent the limitations of our present knowledge, investigation having been carried no further, and other and perhaps better methods still remaining totally untried.

Many of the conclusions arrived at may hereafter be proved unsound, just as many of the theories which were regarded as settled a year or two ago have since been rejected, while others which were then looked upon as heresy are now accepted as gospel. The general tendency of modern whist is to follow the natural course of evolution, inventing systems which gradually approach a highly artificial condition, and then, almost as gradually, crumble into decay.

Several years ago the whist players of America fell into the very serious error of

mistaking the means for the end, and they have persisted in that error to such an extent that it will probably take strong measures to correct it. With the pernicious example of American leads constantly before them they were taught to regard the giving of information as the chief aim in whist, and as a natural consequence they were not satisfied with the artificial system of showing number upon which these leads were based, but proceeded to invent countless other systems for showing endless other things.

These systems have so multiplied during the past year or two that they must now be regarded as private conventions, based upon no principle of play, and intelligible only to those who have previously agreed upon their use and meaning. The fact that these systems have been made public in some form or other, or that they are explained to the adversaries in advance, does not alter the fact that they are private conventions, but rather proves it, because if they were not private, it would not be necessary to explain them, neither would it be necessary for partners to have a previous understanding that they would use them.

To such an extent has this evil grown that it is only a question of time when those in control of whist affairs will find it necessary to put a stop to it. In so doing they will

place themselves in the same ridiculous position as those who import rabbits and then spend millions in their efforts to get rid of the pest. Our authorities—writers, teachers and officials—are largely responsible for the evil as it exists to-day, because they were the ones who originally encouraged and supported American leads, patronizing those who advocated and taught them, and openly antagonizing those who condemned them. Yet so blind are they to the fact that this pernicious system is the root of all the evils which they are now seeking to weed out that they actually propose to formulate an official system of play, with American leads as a basis, but which shall prohibit all other artificial methods of giving information except the trump signal. This is very much like the man who was so much annoyed at the increase of frogs in his fish pond that he ordered their extermination, but instructed his servants not to meddle with the pretty little fishes with the small round heads and long slender tails.

# Tools of the Trade.

In taking up any new occupation, the first thing to be learned is how to handle the tools of the trade, their strength and weakness, and the uses to which they should be applied. A person who does not know these things is like a man who pries corks out of a bottle with a penknife, or a woman who drives nails with the back of a hairbrush.

Every error made at the whist table will be found to belong to one of two classes: the improper selection or the improper use of tools. In whist, the tools are certain combinations of cards and suits, and the player must learn how to use them under the varying conditions of being leader, second, third or fourth hand. Which tools he will select for use upon certain occasions must depend upon his judgment of the situation, or the development during the play of the hand, and he must cultivate the faculty of distinguishing between situations which require different treatment. In forming his conclusions he should be guided by his own common sense

and his knowledge of the solid principles of the game, and not by any system of arbitrary signals previously arranged upon between himself and his partner.

The tools of the whist player which are useful for trick-taking purposes may be roughly divided into three classes: the trumps, the high cards in plain suits, and the small cards in long suits.

It is not proposed to trouble the reader with a list of technical terms, but it will be necessary to call attention to the fact that suits differ in two respects chiefly: in length and in strength. The length is judged by the number of cards, whether above or below the average in value; the strength by the number of high cards the suit contains. In the following pages, when speaking of high cards or "honors," the A K Q J 10 will be meant, all cards below the 10 being classed as "small."

# The Most Common Tools.

A good workman arranges his tools in such a manner that he can readily reach those which are in common use, and a good whist player should mentally arrange and make himself familiar with the combinations of cards which will most frequently fall into his hands, giving especial preference to those which do the really effective work of the game.

In order to show exactly how common each of these tools are, and to give the student an idea of their average or probable value, I have taken 1000 deals played in important trophy matches, and have picked out the number of times that the original leader held a certain number of cards in connection with a certain number of honors in each suit.

Dr. Pole, in his "Philosophy of Whist," p. 126, has given us the number of times that a player will probably hold any given number of cards in a suit, the results being arrived at by calculation. He makes no division of suits according to their strength in high cards, but I have given his figures for the number of

cards immediately under my own, in order to show how closely they agree.

The results of this investigation are shown in the following table, the vertical columns of which show the number of cards in the suit; the horizontal columns the number of honors, counting the ten as one.

*Distribution of Cards and Honors in* 1000 *Deals.*

| HONORS ARE | CARDS IN SUIT. | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| the A K Q J 10. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Four Honors | – | – | – | – | 6 | 12 | 16 | 8 |
| Three Honors | – | – | – | 28 | 86 | 124 | 66 | 20 |
| Two Honors | – | – | 84 | 276 | 358 | 226 | 52 | 8 |
| One Honor | – | 142 | 436 | 592 | 390 | 106 | 38 | 4 |
| No Honor | – | 186 | 328 | 220 | 116 | 28 | – | – |
| Missing Suits | 44 | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Totals :— | 44 | 328 | 848 | 1116 | 956 | 496 | 172 | 40 |
| Pole's figures :— | 48 | 320 | 824 | 1148 | 956 | 500 | 168 | 36 |

The point to which I particularly wish to call attention is the regularity with which the proportion between the number of cards and the number of honors in the suit is preserved. With four honors, suits of six cards are most common; with three honors, suits of five cards, and so on down, until we find that the majority of suits that contain no card above a nine are two-card suits.

Although figures may be dry reading, the student is asked to study this table carefully,

because we shall have frequent occasion to refer to it when we come to discuss methods of play which are based on probability, and not on ascertained facts. When a player opens a suit in which he has at least five cards, for instance, the odds are three to one that he holds more than one honor, because of the 496 five-card suits that he will hold in 1000 deals, there will be 362 that will contain two or more honors.

The first lesson to be drawn from this table is that the combination which the whist player will find in his hand oftener than any other is a suit of three cards containing a single honor. Next to this he will hold suits of two and four cards containing single honors, and then suits of four cards with two honors, after which come the weak two-card suits.

The table shows that a player will hold a suit of five cards or more about twice in every three hands. As the long-suit theory of whist is based chiefly on the importance of establishing such suits, it is interesting to observe that about one-sixth of all such suits contain at least both ace and king, and are practically already established. Another sixth are within one card of being established, leaving only about two out of three that need any playing before they are fit for active service as established suits.

From this it might be assumed that these long suits are not worth the time and attention bestowed upon them and that the tools which require to be kept in good order and handled with care and dexterity, so as to get the best results from their use, are the weak suits; suits of two or three cards with a single honor, and suits of three or four cards containing two honors, because such suits embrace nearly two-thirds of all a whist player will hold, and outnumber the unestablished suits of five or more cards in the proportion of seven to one. This would be true but for another consideration, which is that the combinations of cards which are the most common are not the ones that take the most tricks. More tricks may be taken by one long suit, headed by a single honor, than would be probable with a hundred short suits headed by a nine.

These considerations show that it will be necessary for us to investigate the probable trick-taking value of the cards as well as their most common distribution.

# The Value of a Trump.

In every deal the whole fifty-two cards are distributed among the players, but only one-fourth of these cards can win tricks, because there are only thirteen tricks to be taken. A careful examination of any large number of hands will show that an average of six and a quarter tricks in every deal fall to the trumps. Of these, at least four must do so as a matter of course, because some player at the table must hold at least four trumps in every deal. This leaves nine tricks to be won with the remaining or scattered trumps and the plain suits, which is an average of two and a quarter tricks to each suit. As we shall see presently, these nine tricks are divided in exactly that proportion, the scattered trumps being equal in value to one plain suit.

The figures in the following table are compiled from 1000 deals played in trophy matches. The first column gives the card, the second the number of tricks won in the trump suit itself when trumps were led. The next column gives the number of tricks

won by ruffing plain suits. The last two columns give the totals and the percentage of value of the various trump cards in tenths.

*Value of Trump Cards.*

| CARD. | MADE IN SUIT. | TRUMPED WITH. | TOTAL. | VALUE. IN TENTHS. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 948 | 52 | 1000 | 10 |
| K | 738 | 126 | 864 | 9 |
| Q | 542 | 170 | 712 | 7 |
| J | 330 | 276 | 606 | 6 |
| 10 | 332 | 191 | 523 | 5 |
| Small | 299 | 2241 | 2545 | 3 |
| Totals: | 3194 | 3056 | 6250 | 6¼ |

The last column is not exact, but is sufficiently so to show the proportions. As there are eight small trumps, the total of 2545 must be divided by eight, which gives us the average value of a small trump as about three-tenths of a trick.

It should be noticed that almost as many tricks are made by ruffing as are made in the trump suit itself. The largest number of tricks falling to the trumps in one hand, of which we have any record, was in deal No 31, table 2, in the A. W. L. finals at the congress of 1895; see records of the fifth congress. Only three tricks were taken in plain suits, the remaining ten being trumped.

The lesson to be drawn from this table is,

that if you exhaust the trumps by leading them the average value of the trump suit is reduced, and the average value of the plain suits is increased. If the trumps are allowed to make separately, the additional value of the trump suit is greatly increased, and the chances of making even the average number of tricks out of a plain suit are very much diminished. Careful examination has shown that in almost every case in which no player has led trumps or ruffed in with them up to the fifth trick, only one of the remaining eight tricks has been won in a plain suit. In many cases in which the trumps have been led to bring in one or two cards of a long suit, it will be found that more tricks might have been made by simply taking the tricks with the high cards of the plain suit and making the trumps separately. Many of our best players lose more tricks in the process of exhausting the trumps than they can possibly get back in the plain suits after the trumps are gone.

# The Value of a Plain Suit.

Now let us look at the trick-taking value of the various cards in the plain suits. The figures are for 1000 of each of the plain-suit cards higher than the nine and for the 8000 smaller cards. The last column gives the approximate trick-taking value of the cards in tenths.

*Value of Plain-suit Cards.*

| CARDS. | NUMBER OF TRICKS WON. WHEN LED. | NOT LED. | TOTAL. | VALUE IN TENTHS. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1000 Aces | 343 | 485 | 828 | 8 |
| 1000 Kings | 189 | 384 | 573 | 6 |
| 1000 Queens | 117 | 287 | 404 | 4 |
| 1000 Jacks | 55 | 135 | 190 | 2 |
| 1000 Tens | 40 | 72 | 112 | 1 |
| 8000 Small | 84 | 59 | 143 | $\frac{1}{6}$ |

If this total is multiplied by three, to find the value of three plain suits in 1000 deals, and the result is added to the 6250 found as the total value of the trump suit, we shall have a grand total of 13,000, accounting for every trick in these 1000 deals.

There are several interesting facts connected with these results. It will be noticed that 172 aces in every 1000 are lost, so that five aces are good for four tricks only. Either a king or a queen is twice as likely to win a trick when it is not led as it is when led. The most noticeable fact of all, owing to its important bearing on the long-suit game, is that only eighteen small cards in 1000 win tricks, so that it takes about fifty-six cards below a ten to win a single trick. As a player will hold about eight of these cards in every hand, he should not expect to take a trick with a small card more than once in seven deals.

With these results as a guide, we may judge of the probable trick-taking value of any given hand, and may classify it as either strong or weak. This strength is not the number of tricks that will be taken with it as the cards happen to be distributed that deal, but the average value of the hand if the thirty-eight unknown cards in the other hands were distributed a thousand times in a thousand different ways. In estimating the strength or weakness of a hand, the experienced player takes into account the manner in which the various high cards in plain suits are combined with one another and with the trumps. The original lead, and many later plays, must be guided largely by this esti-

mated strength or weakness. The opener in any hand is absolutely in the dark and must select the course which will most probably be successful, judging from his own hand, and assuming a normal condition of affairs in the other hands. If he plays on the assumption that the distribution of the cards in the other hands is unusual, he plays against probability, and will be more often wrong than right; but if an unusual condition, such as he hopes for, has odds of not more than two to one against it, and he may gain four tricks by risking one, the odds are really in his favor, because if he succeeds only once in three times he will still be two tricks ahead.

As the hand progresses, observation and reasoning take the place of probabilities to a large extent, and in some instances the end play is based entirely on the skillful use of ascertained facts. In almost every hand, however, there are situations in which the player should know the chances for success in certain situations, especially in finesse, in cards of reentry, in holding up, and in trusting partner for protection in certain suits.

# First Principles.

If the average value of a plain suit is not more than two and a quarter tricks, and those tricks are distributed among the four players at the table, it must be obvious that if any individual player expects to get three or four tricks out of one suit he is expecting something which is improbable unless he can establish an unusual condition of affairs, such as leaving the adversaries with no trumps, and finding them with no cards high enough to stop his suit. The most important thing is to get out the trumps, because it is impossible to bring in a long suit while the adversaries have any trumps with which to stop it.

This must show us that in reckoning upon the probability of making more than the average number of tricks in any plain suit, the suit itself is not so important as its combination with the trump suit, and the two must be taken together as part of the same scheme.

Even after the adverse trumps are exhausted, the possibility of making the long suit may not depend upon the suit itself so much

as upon the possession of the lead. If the player with the established suit is fortunate enough to be in the lead himself, the rest is easy; but if another player has the lead the long suit is useless unless the side holding it has some high cards in other suits with which to regain the lead. Five high cards in a plain suit are worthless after the trumps are gone, if another player has five established cards in another suit, and the lead.

This shows us the importance of combining the high cards in different suits for the purpose of re-entry, and it is very improbable that either side will be able to bring in a long suit unless they hold a commanding card in another suit or a fifth trump, either of which may be considered as re-entry cards.

Even if the adverse trumps can be exhausted, and the player holds a card of re-entry, it will be impossible for him to make more than the highest cards of his suit unless he can establish it by catching all the intermediate cards. If there is any question about his ability to do this, the possession of the lead is the most important thing, as an example will show. Suppose two players each hold a suit of five cards, headed by A K J, and that each holds the queen of his adversary's suit, twice guarded, the trumps being all gone. It must be obvious that the one with the lead

must make five of the eight tricks, because he must get his suit established on the third round at the latest, and will then have the guarded queen of his adversary's suit to re-enter with.

Unless a suit contains at least five cards it is not worth playing as a long suit, and the establishment of a four-card suit is usually more of a matter good luck than of good management. If the suit does not contain more than three or four cards, some other player at the table has at least as many, if not more, and any attempt to establish the small cards of a medium suit usually results in making some intermediate cards good in the hands of another player. To take a very common example, if you lead out the ace and king of a suit in which you hold two very small cards, you almost certainly establish two intermediate cards of the suit against you.

In long suits, the high cards are chiefly useful in catching the intermediate cards and so establishing the smaller cards; but in short suits the high cards are chiefly useful for purposes of stopping the adverse suits and of bringing in the small cards of established suits.

When there is no long suit in the hand worth playing for, the necessity for the careful combination of the suit, the trumps, and

the cards of re-entry disappears, and each of these elements stands upon its own merits. The tactics proper to such hands are not those of a general in command of a long line of infantry, covered by artillery and supported by cavalry ; but are rather the tactics of the guerrilla, who will fight for tricks only in positions in which he knows he has the advantage. The whole attention of the player should be given to securing the best possible results from the various combinations of high cards that he may hold in his short suits, and no attempt should be made to establish any of the smaller cards.

A careful examination of the recorded play of any large number of hands will show that about five times as many tricks are lost by the bad management of the short suits as are gained by the good management of the long suits. The reason for this seems to be that the long-suit hands are the strong hands, and to a large extent they play themselves, whereas the weak hands are those in which trifling errors are often serious. Those who are familiar with compass matches must have observed that the big swings are usually made on the side that holds the weak hands.

We have already ascertained the average trick-taking value of the individual cards, but this value may be largely increased or dimin-

ished by the position these cards occupy. This position may be of two kinds: position in the sense of combination with other high cards, and position with regard to the lead. These are both important, but are affected by entirely different conditions. If the player holds the ace and king of a suit it does not make the slightest difference to him who leads the suit so far as taking those two tricks is concerned. But if a player holds a guarded king the position of the lead may make a great difference to him. If he leads the king, he gives two adversaries a chance to capture it. If it is led through, either by his partner or by his right hand opponent, one adversary will have a chance at it. But if the lead comes from his left, he is sure of saving it, bar trumping.

In all combinations of short suits, headed by one or two honors not in sequence, it will be found that the trick-taking value of the cards may be largely increased by not leading them, and by playing them in such a manner as to get the most tricks out of them when second or third hand, each suit being considered as a unit.

From the foregoing considerations we arrive at the first and leading principle of the common-sense game, which is, that the successful management of a long suit, in order to

get more than the average number of tricks out of it, depends entirely upon its combination with the trumps, and with cards of re-entry in other suits; whereas the successful management of short suits depends upon the player's knowledge of the possibilities of the suit itself, and his ability to take advantage of favorable positions, especially in finesse and second hand play.

This naturally divides our subject into two parts: the one dealing with long and strong suits supported by cards of re-entry and trumps; the other dealing with the short and weak suits, which have to depend entirely upon themselves.

# Attack and Defence.

The long-suit game is that of attack, as distinguished from the short-suit game, which is that of defence. It will usually be found that the attack and defence in whist are governed by the following principles:

While the actual position of the cards remains unknown, you must assume the most probable as the one that exists. If you have two honors in a suit, for instance, it is very improbable that your partner also has two, and it is most probable that the three others are equally distributed. If certain positions, favorable and unfavorable, are equally probable, and you are playing an attacking game, you must always assume that the position favorable to you is the one that exists. If you are strong enough to risk a finesse on the return of your suit, for instance, the probabilities that the card finessed against lies on your right or on your left being equal, you must assume the position favorable to you when you finesse. If you assume that the position is unfavorable, and refuse to take the finesse,

you are on the defensive. From this we infer that a player on the defensive should assume all positions, equally probable, to be unfavorable, and should take no chances.

If certain positions make no difference, while others do, you must always play on the assumption that the position which makes a difference is the one that exists, because if it does not exist, you lose nothing. The best example of this is in the compulsory finesse. You lead from a suit headed by king and ten; your partner wins with the queen and returns a small card. He has neither ace nor jack, and the ace must be on your left. If the jack is there also, your play makes no difference; but if the jack is on your right your ten will force the ace and leave you in command of the suit. You simply assume that the position which makes a difference is the one that exists.

The long-suit game being one of attack, you must start out with the assumption that the position is favorable to the success of your enterprise, and that you and your partner will be able to establish and bring in your suit. You must consistently play upon that assumption until you find it is false, and that the position is evidently unfavorable. If the position of the cards which would be necessary to success is improbable, you are foolish to

assume it, and equally foolish to take the offensive and play an attacking long-suit game under such conditions. With a suit of six cards, headed by a single honor, three small trumps and no re-entry, it is quite possible that you may bring in your suit, for your partner may be very strong in trumps and hold stoppers in all the plain suits. But while it is possible, it is very improbable, and if your partner sees that you are continually playing for more than there is in the hands by assuming improbable situations, he will soon lose confidence in you, and play his own hand without any regard to yours.

The very fact that you start to play a long-suit game should be an indication to him that it will not require any improbable distribution of the cards to favor your scheme, and that under normal conditions you will succeed. On the contrary, if you refuse to make such an opening attack, that fact alone will warn him that unless he has a hand much above the average he will do better to play a defensive game; because assuming normal conditions to exist, you feel compelled to act on the defensive from the start.

As we have already seen, any attempt to make more than two tricks out of a plain suit will require that suit to be played in connection with other suits, and with the trumps.

The suit must be established; the adverse trumps must be exhausted, and the suit must be brought in with the assistance of cards of re-entry, which will also prevent the bringing in of the adverse suits. It now remains for us to discover the positions which are favorable for success in each of these three directions, and those which are not.

# The Two Systems.

There are two roads to success in the long-suit game, but which is the better it is impossible, in the light of our present experience, to say. The more common road, and the one that has been traveled ever since whist was a game, is to establish the suit first, leaving the exhaustion of the trumps to a later period in the hand. The other road, which was first suggested in the *New York Sun*, Jan. 17, 1897, and which was traveled with remarkable success by some of the players at the seventh congress, is to exhaust the trumps first, leaving the establishment of the suit to a later period of the hand.

The objections to the first system are: that it shows the adversaries which suit to protect, warns them to make their trumps separately, and leads them to force out your cards of re-entry. The objections to the second system are: that it prevents the adversaries from exhausting the trumps when they are stronger in them than you are, and leaves your partner in doubt as to the suit for which you are playing. It also has an unfortunate tendency to induce a player to lead trumps from hands which are not strong enough to justify it.

On the other hand, it is claimed that these disadvantages are frequently compensated for by inducing the adversaries to run for it with the high cards of your long suit, thereby establishing it for you, and by allowing you and your partner to make your small trumps separately in hands in which the adversaries would have drawn the trumps but for your leading them originally.

The first of these systems is called the long-suit game, because it always starts by showing or establishing the long suit. The second is the top-of-nothing game, so called because if the trumps are not led originally, the success of the long suit not being reasonably probable, the usual opening from the hand is the top of a weak suit in which the original leader has no hope of accomplishing anything, unless the card led will warn or support his partner. Such an opening does not mean that there is no long suit in the hand, and the players adopting it have found that it frequently results in inducing the adversaries to exhaust the trumps when they would not have done so if the long suit had been shown. Under such circumstances a suit is frequently brought in which would have been hopeless if it had been played for originally.

We shall first take up the consideration of the more common form of attack, the long-suit game.

# The Leads.

All long-suit leads are based upon the principle that they are more likely to establish the suit in your own hands than in the hands of the adversary. If you lead from a suit without an honor, the adversaries are much more likely to catch your partner's good cards than he is to catch theirs, and it is against probability that he will be able to establish the suit for you. A very careful analysis of a large number of hands played in trophy matches has shown that when the long suit is opened originally, regardless of its strength, the adversaries win about 55 tricks out of every 100 in that suit, without trumping. This includes suits of all degrees of strength, and if the figures were separated to show the results of leading long weak suits only, the proportion of tricks won by the adversaries would probably be amazing.

If you have only one honor in a suit, the chances are that the adversaries hold the balance of power, and will outlast you. If you have two honors, your partner's share being one of the remaining three, the chances are

that you have the advantage in that suit, and as the number or strength of the honors you hold increases, the probability becomes greater that you will establish that suit easily and rapidly.

Following out this principle, it may be laid down as an axiom that it is hardly worth while to open a suit in the hope of making more than two tricks in it unless the suit contains two honors, or unless the rest of the hand is so much above the average strength that it will make up for the weakness of the longest suit. This is a point which we shall discuss more fully when we come to speak of cards of re-entry.

Many persons consider the most important thing in connection with the long-suit game to be the method of leading from certain combinations of high cards, but as a matter of fact such leads make very little difference so that the partner is able to distinguish between the two great classes into which all such leads may be divided: those which are made to establish the suit, and those which are made to show the command of it.

The whole system of American leads, to which so much importance is attached by some people, is based on the assumption that it is necessary to distinguish between suits of four cards and those of five. If we reject

suits of four cards as not proper to the long-suit game and not worth establishing except under very unusual conditions, the necessity for any system of number-showing leads entirely disappears, because every long-suit opened must consist of at least five cards. All systems of showing number must of necessity be conventions, which have no place in a work of this kind.

We have already found that the average value of a plain suit is about two tricks, so that all long suits which are good on their face for more than two tricks, such as those headed by A K Q, are too good to lead more than once until the trumps are out of their way. If such suits are continued, it must be with the deliberate intention of allowing the adversaries a chance to ruff them, which is not the long-suit game.

From all such strong suits the proper lead is the king, to be followed by a trump or by another plain suit, according to certain conditions of the hand which will presently be explained. Under no circumstances should such a card be followed by another of the same suit unless the player is on the defensive, and assumes the position to be unfavorable for making more than two tricks in the suit.

All long suits which are headed by sequences other than the winning sequence may

be most readily established by leading the top of the sequence. The chief peculiarity about sequences is, that the lower they are the more advantage it is to lead them. If you hold A K Q J of a suit, the position of the lead does not make the slightest difference, because you must win every possible trick in the suit whether you lead it yourself or some one else leads it for you, no matter who.

If you hold the next lower sequence, K Q J 10, the lead may be a slight advantage in discovering whether or not your partner has the ace, because if you play in with such a combination second hand you cannot tell whether the leader or your partner holds the ace. If you play it third or fourth hand, the same doubt arises.

With the next lower sequence, Q J 10, the lead is a decided advantage if your partner has the ace and the king is on your left. In other positions of the higher cards it makes no difference, but we must never forget the principle of assuming that the position that makes a difference is the one that exists. With the next lower sequence, J 10 9, your partner's expectation being one honor in the suit, you may give him a good finesse by leading the jack, and cannot hurt him in any way. If he holds two honors, the lead may be a great advantage to him if the other honor is

on your left. If your partner is one of those who do not understand finessing supporting cards, there is not the slightest use in leading them to him.

All long suits which are headed by fourchettes, one or two honors not in sequence, should be opened with the small cards. If there are three honors, only two of which are in sequence, and those two are not the ace and king, the highest card should be led, except in the case of A J 10 and K J 10. From both of these the author prefers to lead the small cards when strong enough to expect more than two tricks in the suit. With three honors not in sequence, A Q 10, the small card should invariably be led.

When the suit is headed by two honors only, which are in sequence, A K, K Q, Q J, or J 10, it is contrary to the common-sense principles of the long-suit game to lead either of the high cards if you are strong enough to hope for more than two tricks in the suit, because, as we shall see presently, it may force you to give up the control of the suit for the third round, which is the most critical of all in the long-suit game.

The jack and ten should never be led from any combination of high cards, not even from K J 10, because they are necessarily intermediates, and it is one of the fundamental

principles of the common-sense game to lead always the top or the bottom of a suit, never an intermediate card. Nothing is so demoralizing to a partner as interior leads, which have neither the courage of attack nor the virtue of defence, but are simply miserable subterfuges, totally unintelligible, except as private conventions.

Suits that do not contain more than one honor, even if long, are seldom worth playing for, unless they are accompanied by exceptional re-entry strength in the other suits. An exception may sometimes be made in favor of suits headed by the ace, but it must then be held back as a card of re-entry, sometimes until the third round. Long suits headed by single honors are fortunately uncommon, our table of distributions showing that a player will hold them only about once in seven deals. As we shall see presently, such suits can be put to better uses than leading them.

The inferences from the leads will be better understood when the common-sense theory of the long-suit game has been more fully explained. As the play of the second hand belongs to the defence it will not be discussed now, and the play of the third hand must be studied in connection with the development of the leader's hand.

# Perfect Hands.

After a player has learned all the leads, returns, second hand plays, and those mechanical details which first occupy the attention of the beginner, he usually feels the want of some general guiding principle by which all these ideas may be held together and made to work in harmony. Without such a guide, he will simply wander round in space, and the play of every hand will be a succession of perfunctory movements which have no connection with one another. A suit is led, returned, and won by the adversary. Another suit is opened, and the second hand plays in from some high-card combination and leads another suit, and the players go through all the motions with that suit. Each individual trick is perfectly played as a unit, but with no plan, no theory, no definite aim or object in view.

In order to achieve the best results in anything, it is necessary to have some standard which shall represent perfection, so that those who keep this ideal constantly before them will recognize the defects in their work, and

will strive to remedy them. What the whist player wants is an ideal or perfect hand, which may be used as a standard of comparison for determining the perfections or shortcomings of all classes of hands. With his model constantly before him he is an artist; without it, he is little better than a caricaturist.

If a player holds the five highest trumps and the four highest cards in two plain suits, with the lead, it will hardly be necessary to tell him to lead trumps, although he has an entirely missing suit. It is quite possible, of course, that one of the adversaries may hold six trumps and entire command of the missing suit, but no whist player in his senses would hesitate to lead trumps because of that possibility. For all practical purposes his hand is perfect, and demands an immediate lead of trumps.

On the same principle, with the three highest cards of each plain suit and four trumps of any size, no player would hesitate for a moment about leading the trumps, nor about continuing with them every time he got into the lead until all those held by the adversaries were exhausted. It is quite possible, of course, that the player on his right may hold such a combination of high trumps that he can kill every good card in the hands of the leader's partner, several of which would other-

wise have taken tricks; but what whist player would hesitate to lead trumps because of that possibility?

The point in both these cases is, that the player recognizes that his hand cannot be improved by any play or manipulation in the plain suits; and whenever it is useless to continue any of the plain suits, either for the purpose of establishing them or forcing the adversary, the hand may be considered perfect, so far as the plain suits are concerned, and all it requires for its protection is to get the adverse trumps out of its way.

This leads us to the conclusion that whenever a player holds a perfect hand in plain suits, he should lead the trumps; but while his hand is defective he should be very careful about so doing. In order to reduce this rule to a practical working basis, we must ascertain the lowest value of a hand which may be called perfect, or demanding a lead of trumps. As this is simply a matter of probability, even under the most favorable circumstances, we must reverse the process of investigation and find the minimum strength of a hand from which all players would agree that it would be right to lead trumps. Having found this, we may safely consider such a hand as the standard for the lowest degree of perfection.

The result of many years' practical experience at the whist table has demonstrated that when a player holds an established suit, with a card of re-entry in another suit and four trumps, he should lead the trumps. There are some persons who insist on leading trumps, regardless of number, if they have an established suit and re-entry, with the opening lead, but as that principle is not generally agreed to it must be disregarded for the present, and we must accept as our standard of perfection a hand containing an established suit, a card of re-entry, and four trumps. This we shall in future refer to as a perfect hand, because it is one from which trumps should be led, it being useless to go on with the plain suits. On the contrary, all hands from which it would not be right to lead trumps must be imperfect or defective, and they will hereafter be spoken of as such.

# Defective Hands.

Following out this principle and keeping this model before us, we should be able to discover immediately the defects in any given hand which prevent it from being classed as perfect, because these defects must belong to one of three classes:

1. Hands in which the suit is not established.
2. Hands in which there is no re-entry.
3. Hands in which there are not four trumps.

These classifications refer to the opening lead, and some persons think that a fourth should be added to cover hands in which the adversaries have established a suit against you.

If only the first of these defects exists, it can be remedied by proceeding to establish the suit. From this, two results may follow: the command may be forced from the adversaries, or it may be found in the hand of your partner. Suppose you lead from a sequence of K Q J, and your king wins. The ace may be assumed to be in your partner's hand, so that the suit is practically established, and if

that is the only defect in your hand, you should immediately lead trumps.

This gives us the first glimpse of the important principle that if the defective parts of a player's hand can be remedied by his partner, the combined hands are perfect and trumps should be led. If your partner leads a king, and you hold ace, jack, and others of the suit, with a card of re-entry in another suit and four trumps, you should not only win the trick but should lead the trumps immediately. What does it matter whether you or your partner holds the established suit, so that it can be defended and brought in?

If the defect is in the cards of re-entry it cannot be remedied, unless certain cards which are not good enough to be considered re-entry cards in the first place become so during the play. For instance, you hold four trumps and a fair suit, but your only hope of re-entry is a queen. This queen suit is led by the player on your right; the king goes up on your left, and your partner wins it with the ace. If the re-entry was the only defect in your hand, it is remedied. You will often be able to place certain cards in your partner's hand which you can rely upon for re-entry, such as when one adversary plays the king and the other the ace of a plain suit, marking your partner with the queen.

If the defect is in the trump suit, it cannot possibly be remedied in your own hand, because nothing will ever give you four trumps if they are not dealt to you in the first place. Under such circumstances, there are still two chances for you. Four trumps represents only more than your average expectation, and even if you have but three, they may give you sufficient advantage if the four-trump hand of an adversary has been forced. Your other chance is that your partner may be able to remedy the defect in trump strength, and you should be keenly on the watch for any signs of his holding four or more trumps, especially after you get your suit established. These signs may come to you in various ways, as by his passing doubtful tricks, or taking a finesse in plain suits, which almost invariably indicates strength. If he uses the trump signal, he may show his strength in that manner, but it is much better for players to accustom themselves to act independently of such arbitrary signals. You should also be on the watch for indications of weakness in trumps on the part of the adversaries, which would justify you in inferring strength in your partner's hand. If they show strength in trumps, it will be better for you to force the strong hand once or twice, which may bring him down to your level, no matter how weak

you are, and will justify you in leading trumps with less than four.

The chief thing to be borne in mind is, that whether the elements which go to make up a perfect hand exist in one hand alone, or in the combined hands of the partners, the condition is the same, and whichever first gets the lead after the hand is perfect should go to trumps.

From these considerations we are able to formulate the common-sense principle of playing the long-suit game, which is this: Upon taking up your hand, no matter what position at the table you occupy, your first duty will be to decide whether or not you have a long-suit hand; that is, a hand containing a suit worth playing for. If you have, the next thing is to determine exactly the defects that exist in your hand, and the probability of your being able to remedy them, either by your own play, or with reasonable assistance from your partner.

Instead of wandering aimlessly through the thirteen tricks that are about to be played, your mind will then be set upon a definite goal, and your constant aim will be to bring your hand to perfection if you can. If it cannot be made perfect, it should at least be possible to remedy some of its defects, so as to be in a position to take advantage of

favorable developments during the play, perhaps at the eighth or ninth trick. Instead of having only a confused and general idea of the possibilities in any given deal, you will be watching for the hand to develop until it reaches a certain point, and the moment you see it has reached that point, you will know that the time for action has come, because the conditions are favorable to the success of an attacking game.

# Developing the Hands.

In order to carry out this common-sense theory of playing the long-suit game, in which so much depends on the mutual relationship of the two hands, it will be necessary to understand its principles so thoroughly that the defects in your own hand will be perfectly clear to your partner, and the strong points in his will be equally clear to you.

In order to show how this may be done, it will be necessary to take a few examples, in which the student should lay out the actual cards so that he may better understand the various methods of demonstrating his hand to his partner, according to its possibilities. For convenience we shall assume hearts to be trumps in every instance. Sort out a pack into suits, and give yourself the following cards :

♡ A Q J 2; ♣ A K Q 10 5; ◇ Q 4 3; ♠ A.

This is an ideal long-suit hand. You have an established suit, re-entry in spades, with a possible stopper in diamonds, and four good

trumps, and should therefore lead trumps immediately. Such an opening tells your partner that your hand is perfect, and needs no development in the plain suits.

♡ K Q 4 3; ♣ A K J 10 7 3; ◇ K Q; ♠ 4.

With a certain re-entry in diamonds, and a practically established club suit, you should lead the trumps, in which you are strong enough to win probably two rounds. If your trumps are weak, however, as in the following:

♡ 10 5 4 3; ♣ A K J 10 7 3; ◇ A; ♠ 4 3.

it will be necessary to show your suit first, because you are depending on your partner's strength in trumps to exhaust them. If you begin with the trumps, and find your partner able to exhaust them at once, you will have to follow suit to every round, and he will have no means of judging in which suit you are strong. If the adversaries get into the lead and show their suits, that will guide him of course, in which case your play will make no difference; but as already pointed out you must always assume that the position in which your play may make a difference is the one that exists.

In following out this principle of showing the suit first, it is important to observe this

exception. If you have only two probable winning cards in the suit, you cannot afford to show it, because unless your partner can afterward lead you a card which will give you a good finesse, or the second round establishes the suit, you will be in the very bad position of having to lead the suit a third time to clear it, which will probably leave none of the suit in your partner's hand to put you in again. It is usually better, under such circumstances, not to show the suit, because the adversaries may discard it, or your partner may be able to lead you an honor. From such a hand as the following it would be unwise to show the suit before leading the trumps, even though you are weak in them.

♡ 10 5 4 3; ♣ A K 5 4 3 2; ◇ A J; ♠ 4.

Many players refuse to recognize this as a long-suit hand, and will not lead the trumps, but will make the ace and king of the suit if possible, and then force the command. This frequently turns out well by forcing the strong trump hand, but it is very disastrous if the partner holds even one honor in the long suit and is also strong in trumps. As the chances are that your partner holds one of the three honors outstanding, it is safer to play such a hand on long-suit principles, especially as you will not make even your ace and king more

than once in three times, if you lead them right out.

Many players manage these weak trump hands on a compromise principle, showing the suit and then leading the singleton. There should be no deception about such a lead, provided the player can be depended on not to mistake it for an attempt to show a re-entry card and then a long suit. If the singleton was high enough to be a supporting card, however, the partner might mistake the play for an attempt to show the absence of any re-entry, which is not true of the example, and would give a totally false impression of the hand.

If you have any combination of cards in which you are willing to take a finesse on the second round of the suit, you are quite safe in showing the suit first. Such combinations are: A K J 10 and others; A K J and others; or even A K 10 9 and others. This supposes, of course, that the first round will not establish the suit, and that it is doubtful if the second will either if the ace and king are both given up. Whenever you have such combinations in other suits that you are willing to have the lead come from your left, you should be ready to take a finesse in the second round of your own suit; but if you are not strong enough to look forward to a finesse as a part

of the strategy of your hand, you should not show your suit before leading the trumps.

The following hands are imperfect, and the first step must be to remedy their defects.

♡ K Q 4 3; ♣ K Q 10 9 7 2; ◇ A Q; ♠ 4.

The suit is not established. If you lead the king and it wins, you should immediately open the trumps. If your king falls to the ace and you can get in again without losing your ace of diamonds or being forced, you should lead the trumps.

Some players attach great importance to showing the re-entry suit before proceeding to establish the long suit, especially when they are weak in trumps, but such a course is a direct violation of the common-sense principles of the game. Take the following hand:

♡ 10 5 4 3; ♣ K J 9 7 4 3; ◇ A K; ♠ 4.

If you show the re-entry by leading the king of diamonds, and then open the unestablished suit, you give up one of your re-entry cards before the proper time has come to use it, for it may be of the greatest importance for you to get into the lead more than once, even if you get your suit established in one round. By not leading your long suit immediately, you lose valuable time, and also

deprive yourself of the option of occasionally following a high card of a long suit with a singleton.

When a hand is defective in two respects, it is not always possible to make it clear to your partner which of the two elements is missing. Take the following hands:

♡ 9 3; ♣ K Q 8 7 4; ◇ Q 5 4; ♠ K 3 2.

♡ A 4 3 2; ♣ K Q 8 7 4; ◇ Q 5; ♠ 3 2.

In the first, the defect is in the trumps, and in the second it is in the re-entry cards. From both hands the club suit would be led, but in the first it would be your duty to watch carefully for signs of trump strength in your partner's hand, while in the second it would be to watch for a re-entry card, especially the command of the adverse suit, or a stopper in it.

From some hands you will be compelled to lead trumps even without any card of re-entry. Under the following circumstances, for instance:

♡ A K Q 2; ♣ 7 3; ◇ A Q J 5 4 3; ♠ 2.

You lead the ace of diamonds and catch the king from your adversary. Although you have no re-entry card, you must lead three

rounds of trumps, and if that leaves one still against you, you can force it with the established suit. To continue the suit with such a hand would be absurd. Again :

♡ K Q J 6 ; ♣ K J 10 6 4 2 ; ◇ 7 ; ♠ 5 2.

The club suit is opened. Your partner wins with the ace and returns the 5 ; you finesse the 10 and hold the trick. This marks the only club outstanding in Z's hand, and it would be folly to continue the suit, which would probably compel B to overtrump Y. B would then have to open another suit, in which you have absolutely nothing, and your weakness would be immediately exposed to the adversaries. Under such circumstances, the trump is the only good continuation.

When you have a good suit, but neither re-entry nor trump strength, it is usually best to show your suit first and then to demonstrate the defective nature of your hand to your partner.

♡ J 7 2 ; ♣ A K Q 9 8 ; ◇ 10 5 4 2 ; ♠ J.

By leading the club once and then switching to the spade jack you inform your partner that you have a good suit, too good to lead a second time until you are sure all hope of making it is gone. At the same time it warns him that you have no re-entry cards, because

your jack is the highest card in your hand, outside of your suit. Again :

♡ K J ; ♣ K Q J 7 6 2 ; ◇ 10 9 2 ; ♠ 6 5.

The club suit is opened ; partner wins the first trick with the ace and leads trumps. Both your king and jack win. It is evidently useless to continue your own suit, because your partner cannot get in to continue the trumps, of which he must hold ace and queen. It is also important that you should show him that you have no re-entry card, and your best continuation is the 10 of diamonds.

When you have a re-entry card in another suit, it may be shown by leading a small card of the suit, but it will be necessary to lead a card which cannot be mistaken for the top of a weak suit.

♡ A Q ; ♣ K Q 10 7 6 2 ; ◇ A 5 3 ; ♠ 4 2.

You lead clubs. Your partner plays ace and leads trumps. You play ace and return the queen, which he passes, showing that he cannot afford to win the queen if you have no more trumps. Although it is probable that your partner has the jack of your suit, it is not by any means certain, and it would be a very dangerous experiment for you to lead a small club. As he must have some re-entry cards, or five trumps, your safest continuation

is a small card of your re-entry suit. He cannot possibly mistake this for weakness or a singleton, as you have no more trumps.

There are a number of situations in which you will find it necessary to preserve the best cards of your long suit because they are your only chance for re-entry.

♡ A 4 3 2 ; ♣ A 9 8 6 5 4 2 ; ◇ 7 2.

The only reasonable chance for such a suit is that your partner can win the first trick and will then lead the trumps. If he cannot, you may lose your ace ; if he can, you may make a great game, and the risk should always be run when there is only one radical defect in your hand, in this case the re-entry. In the actual game, the partner won the first trick with the queen and led the Q J and 10 of trumps through the king turned, failing to bring it down. The original leader very properly won the third round of trumps, led the ace of his long suit, catching the king, and then forced the king of trumps. Had he passed the third round of trumps, hoping to catch the turned king, he would never have made anything but his two aces.

# Avoiding Long-Suit Openings.

When the hand is hopelessly defective, the long suit not being worth playing for, and unaccompanied by either re-entry or trumps, it is useless to touch it. From the following hands, for instance, it is folly to lead the long suit first, because it can result only in deceiving your partner, and shaking his confidence in the soundness of your openings:

1. ♡ Q 10 7; ♣ J 9; ◇ 10 8 7 5 4 3 2; ♠ 9.
2. ♡ Q 2; ♣ Q 9 8 6 2; ◇ 9 5 3 2; ♠ J 3.
3. ♡ 7 5 2; ♣ A K 10 9 3; ◇ 10 2; ♠ 6 5 4.
4. ♡ J 9 5; ♣ K Q 7 5 4 3 2; ◇ 8 4; ♠ 3.
5. ♡ 9 7; ♣ 10 6; ◇ K 5 4; ♠ K 10 7 5 4 2.

Even the third example does not justify showing your suit, because you are not willing to take the finesse which may be necessary to keep control of it for the third round. In the fifth, you have a re-entry, and a suit containing two honors; but as your partner's share of the honors is one only, even if it is the ace, you cannot keep control until the third round and still get in, unless your re-

entry lives until the trumps are gone and your partner has three of your suit; both of which conditions are against probability.

Just as there are hands from which it is useless to lead the longest suit, probabilities being against its success if opened, so there are hands from which it is useless to lead the trumps until you find out who is going to benefit by it. To lead trumps just because you have them deceives your partner, because a trump lead should indicate a perfect hand, and if you make such an opening from a hand in which you have absolutely nothing in the plain suits to play for, and everything to wait for, how is your partner to trust you?

♡ K 10 7 6 4 2; ♣ Q; ◇ 4 3 2; ♠ 8 7 5.
♡ Q 9 7 3 2; ♣ 2; ◇ 7 6; ♠ 9 6 5 3 2.

What is the object in leading trumps from either of these hands?

If the adversaries establish a suit against you, it is usually very bad policy to lead trumps, however strong in them, unless you have an established suit to offset theirs. Take the following hand, for instance:

♡ A K Q 10 8; ♣ A 5; ◇ J 10 6; ♠ 8 6 2.

You are the dealer. The club suit is opened with the king, forcing your ace. For what purpose will you lead the trumps? To

remedy the defects in the adversaries' hands by exhausting the trumps for them, leaving them with an established suit to force you? For a possible suit in your partner's hand? Would it not be better first to see whether or not he holds any such suit?

When you hold a strong trump suit, which is no use to you, your attention should be directed to watching for indications that your partner has a suit worth defending. If he leads cards that warn you that he has nothing worth playing for, keep quiet with your trumps if you have nothing yourself, because the adversaries must have the strength, and to exhaust the trumps is to increase the average value of the plain suits in their hands.

# The Adversaries' Hands.

It is very necessary to watch carefully the play of the adversaries, so that you may be able to judge of their ability to prevent you from perfecting your hand, and also to take warning when they are likely to establish a perfect hand against you. When the strength is pretty nearly balanced, one side may get a hand almost perfect and the other may immediately render it defective; perhaps by forcing out the re-entry, perhaps by forcing out a trump. Under such conditions, a player must exercise good judgment in his continuations, and the style of game adopted by his opponents will be a matter for careful consideration. Take the following hand:

♡ K J 3 2; ♣ K Q J 7 4 3; ◇ K Q; ♠ 9.

The club suit is opened, and the first trick is won second hand by the ace. This establishes your suit, and your hand is practically perfect and ready for an immediate lead of trumps. But let us see what the adversaries have to say about their hands. A small dia-

mond is led, your partner plays the 3: third hand the jack, and you win with the queen. A moment's consideration will show that your hand is now defective, because your card of re-entry is gone, if the person on your left is a good player.

You have a suit worth playing for, and you have established it. He does not run for it by playing any high cards; neither does he warn his partner by leading supporting cards, but he opens with a small diamond. In this suit he must hold the ace at least, and he is evidently trying to remedy one of the defects in a long-suit hand by establishing the suit. If you now lead trumps, and either adversary can get in before you exhaust them, the diamond suit will be led again and your king killed, probably establishing the suit against you and getting a force on you.

Under such circumstances the best continuation would be either to go on with your suit, trusting it would force the strong hand; or to lead the spade 9, as a warning to your partner. The first plan is probably the better, as it may leave you with the numerical superiority in trumps, which is always equal to a card of re-entry.

♡ A 9 5 4; ♣ Q 5; ◇ K Q J 10 3 2; ♠ K.

This hand is doubly defective. The suit is

not established, and there is no legitimate re-entry. You lead the diamonds, winning the first trick and crediting your partner with the ace. He cannot have four trumps and re-entry, or he would have taken the trick away from you. If you lead trumps, it is a pure gamble, for you are almost sure to find four against you in one hand, and it is better to persist in the suit or to lead the club queen, the latter being a warning to your partner that you have no re-entry. If this queen wins, however, as it did in the actual play, it marks your partner with the necessary re-entry, and you should immediately go to trumps.

♡ 9 6 4 3; ♣ 9; ◇ K Q 2; ♠ K Q J 8 5.

The player on your right leads a small diamond, and your queen wins. You lead a spade and hold the trick. Your hand is perfect, because the ace of diamonds cannot be on your left, and your king is a sure re-entry card. In the actual play the dealer put up the ace of trumps third hand, and returned the jack, with the deuce in his hand, won by the player on your right with the king, the queen falling from his partner. This marked four trumps originally in the hand of the player who opened the diamonds. He saw his difficulty, and led the jack of diamonds, not the

ace. This forces out your re-entry, and makes a continuation of the trump lead impossible because you lead up to the major tenace. By forcing with the established spades you must make both trumps and two spades eventually unless the adversaries shift to clubs and can win every trick in that suit.

If you have a hand which is defective in one respect only, such as re-entry cards, and the adversaries lead trumps, do not interfere with them if you have the ace, but let them get out two or three rounds before you stop them. This will enable you to force with the established suit, and will probably make it all, unless you find five or six trumps in one hand against you.

♡ K 4 3 2; ♣ A J 10 7 4 3, ◇ 2; ♠ 7 6.

You lead the small club; partner's queen being won by the king. This player opens the diamond suit by leading the king, and follows with a small trump. This shows that he is depending on his partner's strength in trumps. The ace is played third hand and the jack returned, your partner dropping the 7 and 9. It is folly to win this trick, leaving two established trumps on your right and one small on your left. Let him lead again, and by winning the third round and getting the first force on the four-trump hand, you must make four tricks in clubs and one in trumps.

It will sometimes happen that you will open a suit in which your partner can do nothing to help you, so that you cannot establish it, although you may have the trumps to defend it. Under such circumstances you should be on the watch for indications of a better suit in your partner's hand.

♡ A K 5 4; ♣ Q J; ◇ K 10 7 4 3; ♠ 7 6.

You open the diamonds, and the fourth hand wins the trick with the 9. He leads the spade king, which your partner wins with the ace. He leads the club king, following it with a small one, allowing your queen to make. The position now is, that both sides have a suit and re-entry. You have the clubs, with the king of diamonds to get in with; they have the spades with the ace of diamonds to get in with. Being in the lead, you should immediately get out three rounds of trumps as the only chance for a great game.

# Inferences for the Third Hand.

Let us now suppose that you are third player on the first trick, and see what inferences can be drawn from the manner in which your partner opens his hand, hearts being always trumps, as before. The student should lay out the cards, so that the exercises may resemble the actual play as much as possible.

♡ A Q J ; ♣ A 10 ; ◇ Q 6 5 4 2 ; ♠ A K 2.

Your partner leads a small club, and the 6 and 4 fall on your ace. You return the 10, and he catches the queen from the player on your left and immediately leads a small trump. The inferences from this play are, that the hand was defective only in the unestablished suit, and that this defect must now be remedied ; in other words he holds the jack, and can catch all the outstanding clubs. The moment he got the suit established he led trumps, showing that he held a re-entry, which must be either ace or king of diamonds. You finesse the trump jack, and lead ace and queen. Both these cards win, leaving you

with the lead. Your only possible continuation is the queen of diamonds. This will give your partner a finesse if he holds the ace, and will make his re-entry certain if he holds the king.

♡ A K 6 5 3; ♣ A J 3 2; ◇ 6 5; ♠ 3 2.

Your partner leads club king, showing a defective hand, because the suit is not established. Whether or not he has any re-entry is quite unimportant, because you have a fifth trump. You should win his king and make sure of three rounds of trumps immediately, so as to exhaust them as far as possible before you can be forced.

If you have one less trump, but a re-entry in either of the other suits, you should equally win the king and lead the trumps. Never waste any time when you have a perfect hand.

♡ K 5 3; ♣ A J 9 5 3; ◇ J 10 2; ♠ 6 4.

Partner leads club king. You have neither trump strength nor re-entry, so you let it alone. He follows with the 8, marking him with the Q and 10. If you take this trick, what do you propose to do with the lead? You have nothing to accomplish, therefore you should let it alone. By passing the second time, if the 8 holds the trick without being ruffed, you practically tell your partner

that one defect in his hand is remedied, for you have the entire suit between you. If he is strong enough to go to trumps he may do so; but he is fairly warned that you cannot help him, because you decline to take the lead and do so.

♡ A K 4 2; ♣ A Q 6; ◇ K 7 3; ♠ J 6 4.

Your partner leads a small club; the deuce is played second hand; you finesse the queen and return the ace, the 10 falling on your right. That player cannot have held J 10 2, or K J 10 2, or he would have gone up on the first trick. Your partner must have the king, and his suit must be established if he held five of it originally. That defect being remedied, you should lead the trumps, as you have four of them and re-entry, getting out three rounds before allowing the adversaries a chance to get a suit established against you.

♡ K 6 2; ♣ A 8 6; ◇ A 8 4; ♠ 10 7 6 2.

Your partner leads king of diamonds, which you allow to win. He shifts to the club queen, which you finesse, and it wins. Your partner should have four trumps, but no re-entry card. If his hand had been defective in three ways, suit unestablished, no re-entry, and weak trumps, he would probably not have opened it in that way, unless he was gambling everything on the diamond suit. If he does

not lead trumps, you may be sure that his hand is hopelessly defective.

♡ A K Q 2 ; ♣ A 10 9 8 7 4 ; ◇ 6 3 ; ♠ 4.

The player on your left leads the jack of clubs, which your partner covers with the queen, third hand playing the 6. It should be evident that your partner holds the king and at least one other, and you should lose no time about taking the trick away from him and getting out three rounds of trumps. Nothing but five trumps in one hand against you will prevent you from making four more tricks in clubs and all your trumps, because if you cannot catch the fourth trump, you can force with the clubs and re-enter with the small trump.

It is very important that you should correct your partner in his inferences if you see that he is laboring under a false impression as to the situation. This is comparatively simple in such cases as those in which you have opened a weak suit and he has led trumps under the evident impression that your suit is strong. By winning the first round of trumps and leading a lower card of the weak suit you may disabuse his mind of the impression that your suit is worth playing for. Between good players such a misunderstanding is unlikely, but one has to play with all sorts of partners.

Sometimes the case is more complicated, as in the following situation :

♡ A 5 2 ; ♣ A 5 ; ◇ 7 5 4 ; ♠ A Q 8 7 3.

Partner leads club queen, which wins, and he immediately follows with a small trump. He evidently held Q J 10 and other clubs, and knowing you must hold the ace, or both ace and king, concludes that his suit is established, because if you have not the king you can catch it. Now, you know that the king cannot be caught, because it must have been more than once guarded, or it would have been played on the queen. The next time the suit is led your ace will be forced and the king will be free, so you see your partner is playing under a misapprehension, which you must correct. By leading the ace of clubs before returning the trump, you should be able to make it clear to your partner that the ace was not worth keeping. If he has any common sense, he will not continue the trumps a third time if he wins the return, but will force you with a small club, probably killing the king at the same time. After taking the force, you can lead your weak suit, that being probably your partner's re-entry.

♡ K 10 7 4 ; ♣ 10 9 5 3 ; ◇ Q J 4 ; ♠ 10 2.

Partner leads ace queen of clubs. The player

on your right wins second round with the king, and leads a small diamond, your jack holding the trick. This shows that you have a perfect hand. Your partner has all the clubs and must have either ace or king of diamonds. Even if he holds king alone and it falls to the ace, your queen will be a re-entry, and as you have four trumps you should lead them at once.

♡ A K 10 5; ♣ J 9 2; ◇ A 8; ♠ K 5 4 2.

Partner leads club king and shifts to the spade queen. This shows a great club suit, no re-entry, and probable weakness in trumps. The ace on your right wins the spade, making your king good for re-entry. He leads a small diamond. Upon this you should play the ace second hand, and lead trumps immediately, making sure of three rounds. In the actual play three rounds cleared the trumps, partner holding 4 3 2, and all the clubs made.

♡ A Q 10; ♣ A 5 4; ◇ K J 10 8 5 2; ♠ 10.

Partner leads club king and follows with a small trump. Your queen and ace catch the jack from fourth hand, and your ten wins the next trick, leaving the 9, which was turned up, on your left, your partner with the king. If you play your partner's suit, leading club ace and then small, the dealer will almost cer-

tainly save his trump; but if you lead the small club your partner will win the trick unless Z had only one orginally, and when your partner leads the trump king to catch the 9 you can get rid of the ace of his suit.

♡ Q 10 3 2; ♣ J 10 6 4; ◇ J; ♠ 7 6 3 2.

Partner leads spade king, and follows with the deuce of diamonds. The queen is played second hand, and your jack falls. The inference from this play is that your partner is very strong in spades, too strong to go on; has a re-entry in diamonds, but is very weak in trumps.

♡ Q 7 2; ♣ Q 8 7 6 5 4; ◇ Q J; ♠ Q 5.

Partner leads small spade and your queen wins, the 4 and 7 falling. You return the 5; the 8 is played second hand and your partner's 9 forces the ace. Partner has certainly finessed, and must hold the king. This finesse should indicate to you that his suit is well worth playing for, and he is either strong in trumps or in a good position to have the lead come from his left. Player on your right leads a small diamond, and your jack holds the trick. You should lead the trumps at once, although holding three only, because you and your partner between you have every suit stopped and one established.

♡ A K Q 10; ♣ Q 4; ◇ A Q 9 8; ♠ 4 3 2.

Partner leads 10 of diamonds, second hand plays small and you pass it. The 10 holds the trick, and is followed by the deuce: your queen catching the jack from second hand. You are fairly warned to keep still with your trumps, and lead the club queen. The 9 falls second hand and your queen holds. You should immediately lead three rounds of trumps, because your partner must hold both ace and king of clubs, or the player holding the 9 would have covered the queen second hand.

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In the management of long-suit hands there are several very important points which should be carefully studied by the common-sense player. These are: Retaining command of your long suit; preserving cards of re-entry; and handling the trumps in such a manner as to leave you in the lead after the third round.

Many players who open and develop their hands with good judgment lose control of them at the most critical point, and what should have been a good game goes all to pieces. When this happens, it can usually be traced to one or other of the errors just pointed out, and we shall examine a few of the positions in which they commonly occur.

# The Control of Suits.

One of the most common errors is in losing control of the suit for which you are playing. This may be due to either of two causes: the inherent weakness of the suit itself, or its bad management.

It has already been pointed out in connection with the subject of leads that a suit which does not contain at least five cards and two honors is not worth playing for, unless it is accompanied by exceptional re-entry strength. If you have two honors in a suit, your partner's expectation is one of the remaining three, and if that one will probably either win the first trick or force the command of the suit, you should be able to win the second or third round to a certainty, bar trumping, or should be strong enough to take such a finesse on the second round as must leave you in control on the third. If you are not equal to this, you are not strong enough to play the long-suit game, and would do better to play on the defensive.

Taking this principle as a guide it should

be evident that it is not worth while to lead a king from king, queen and small cards, because if you lose the king you have no card with which to finesse the second round and keep the command. If you have K Q 10, however, and are strong enough to look forward to a possible finesse of the 10 on the second round, you may lead the king first; otherwise it is safer to begin with the small cards if you hope to make more than two tricks out of the suit.

If you open a suit headed by K J, or even K 10, you must always look forward to the possibility of having to finesse the second round so as to keep the control of the suit until the third. It must always be remembered that unless you and your partner hold A K Q of the suit between you, it is impossible to get more than two tricks out of it without a finesse of some kind, unless you can establish the suit in two rounds, which will occur only about once in four times. The longer you are in a suit, the better the chance to catch all the cards out against you, so that very long suits may be played with less honors than shorter ones. Seven cards headed by A K are better than five cards headed by A K J.

Even after a suit has been fairly started, the control of it is often lost by attempting to

kill two birds with one stone. When you have a chance to catch a high card on your left, think a moment to be sure that even if you catch it, you will not be making another high card good on your right, which will block your suit. If you still have a chance to make the suit, and cannot catch both the cards which you know to be out against you on the second round, do not attempt to get either of them, but let the one make and hold the command over the other. Take the following example:

♡ Q J 3; ♣ K 10 9 7 4; ◇ K 10 9; ♠ K 7.

You lead a club; partner wins with the ace, the 3 and 5 falling. He returns the 6, and the 8 falls on your right, the deuce being marked in your partner's hand. If you play the king, you abandon all control of the suit, because you cannot possibly catch both jack and queen. According to the principle already laid down, that you should not open a suit in which you are not willing to take a finesse on the second round, you must play the 9. In the actual game, Y won with the queen and led A J of diamonds. On the second round your partner discarded a spade, showing four trumps, and giving you all the elements of a perfect hand, from which it was quite safe to lead trumps, even with the whole diamond suit against you.

♡ K Q J 6; ♣ K J 10 6 4 2; ◇ 7; ♠ 5 2.

While this hand has two defects, one of them can be remedied. You open the club suit. Partner wins with ace, the 7 and 3 falling. He returns the 5, and second hand plays the 8. Your partner cannot have another club, because he has not the queen, and the Q 9 are the only ones not accounted for. As he can never lead clubs to you again, and you have no re-entry card, your only chance is to retain command of the suit yourself by finessing the 10. In the actual game this held the trick, the 9 falling. This compelled the player to go to trumps even without a re-entry, losing the first round, taking a force in diamonds and succeeding in bringing down all the trumps with two more leads, making the clubs.

♡ A K 7 5; ♣ A 10 8 7 3; ◇ K 3; ♠ K J.

You lead a small club. The jack is played second hand; partner wins with the king and returns the 2, the 4 and 5 falling on your right. Now, unless your partner held four clubs originally, it is impossible for you to catch both queen and 9. You must finesse the 8; not the 10. If the Q 9 are both on your left, one of them must win, and it does not matter which. If the Q 6 are there, the Q must win. That the Q 9 6 are all there is too

improbable for consideration. The only position that will make a difference in your play is that the Q is alone and the 9 and 6 are both on your right, and according to the principle already laid down, we must always assume that the position that makes the difference is the one that exists, so we must finesse the 8, because both ace and 10 may be needed to catch the 9 and 6. If the trick is won on your left, you have a great advantage in position on the unplayed suits, because you must be left with re-entry and four trumps—a perfect hand. This position occurred in one of the matches for the Utica trophy, and the failure to finesse properly cost four tricks in clubs.

♡ A J 2; ♣ J 6 5 4 3 2; ◇ 5 2; ♠ 4 3.

This is a very bad hand to open, because the best suit is long and weak, and the hand is otherwise defective; but the short suits are even worse leads. In the actual game the club was led; the queen was played second hand, killed by the ace, the 8 falling fourth hand. Partner led trumps, and the finesse of the ace and return of the jack caught the queen on the third round, the dealer renouncing, showing that your partner had five trumps originally. Partner now leads the club 9, which is covered with the 10. A moment's reflection must show you that if you attempt

to win this trick with the jack, your hand is absolutely dead, and that your only chance is that the king will fall and that your partner has the 7 to lead to you when he gets in again. In the actual game, the thoughtless play of the jack lost four tricks.

# Cards of Re-entry.

The general principle governing cards of re-entry is, that they should supply the deficiencies of the long suit, and take the place of high trumps. If you have a suit already established and four average trumps, one card of re-entry will probably be enough to perfect your hand if you can win the third round of trumps and get the first force on the four-trump hand with your established suit. One card of re-entry is enough to justify you in playing for a long suit containing two honors, always counting on your partner to have average strength, of course. If you can get your suit established and the trumps going before you lose your re-entry, it should take five trumps in one hand to stop you.

But if you have a suit which will probably require at least two leads to get it established, its weakness may be made up for by strength in re-entry cards. A suit headed by Q 10 only, should have two re-entry cards in order to give it any chance of success. The more re-entry cards a player holds, the more prob-

able it is that he can establish and bring in a long weak suit, and the weaker the re-entry cards, the stronger must be the suit in order to make anything out of it.

Re-entry cards will also take the place of high trumps, because they enable a player to get into the lead and go on with the trumps, even if he cannot win a trick in them. When a player holds re-entry cards in two suits, he can afford to lead his trumps even when they are both short and weak, but he must be careful if his re-entry cards are taken away from him before he can exhaust the trumps.

If the re-entry card is lost before the suit can be defended and brought in, any other card which has the slightest chance of becoming a re-entry must be carefully preserved. Take the following example:

♡ Q J; ♣ K J 10 7 6; ◇ K 5 2; ♠ J 10 9.

This is the dealer's hand, and it is doubly defective. The player on the left leads diamonds twice, and your king must be given up to win the second round. The clubs are opened, and your partner's queen falls to the ace. Your suit is now established, but your hand is still defective in trumps, and your re-entry is gone. The trumps you cannot help, but you should keep the spades while there is a chance. In the actual game, the player

on your right led trumps, and had to persevere for four rounds to win the last one held by your partner. On the two last rounds a diamond and a spade were discarded, instead of letting go a club to keep the possible re-entry, and three tricks were lost, the player on the right having no more diamonds, and being forced to open the spade K with K Q, your partner holding the ace.

It is often very necessary for the partner of the long-suit player to sacrifice his own hand to save his partner's re-entry cards. Leading the only honor at the head of a long suit, as in the Deschapelles coup, is one form in which the opportunity presents itself, and the principle underlying it is too well known to need explanation here. Another form, and one little understood, is putting up high cards second hand, to save partner's inferred or supposed re-entry cards.

♡ K 7; ♣ K 4 3 2; ◇ K 4 2; ♠ 7 6 5 3.

Partner leads a small diamond. You win with the king and return the 4. He finesses the 10, holds the trick, and leads a small trump, your king being killed by the ace. The player on your left leads A J of spades, his partner winning the second round with the king. It is obvious that he can have no more spades if the player on your left had five, and

that your partner's remaining cards are three trumps and a re-entry in clubs, with his suit. The player on your right leads a club, on which you should play the king, so as to save your partner's re-entry until at least one more round of trumps is brought out. In the actual game the king was not played, and your partner was obliged to play the ace to win the 10, and then lead away from the J. 9 8 of trumps, finding the 10 3 on his right, the Q 6 5 on his left. The failure to put up the king of clubs second hand cost four tricks.

# Management of Trumps.

The management of the trump suit is a large subject, but as the general principles are usually explained in the ordinary text books, it is not our purpose to devote any space to them here. Those who are not well up in the common uses of trumps are referred to "Whist Tactics," page 91, et seq., in which they will find 33 different points in the management of the trump suit fully explained.

We have already found that the stronger a player is in re-entry cards, the weaker he may be in his long suit, and have also observed that the same relationship exists between the re-entry cards and the trumps. Trumps may be led much more freely when the re-entry cards are in different suits, and many good players will lead trumps from one or two only if they have entire command of two suits. With one good suit and re-entry in both the others, very few players will stop to establish the suit, but will lead trumps at once. Superior re-entry strength is imperative when leading from four small trumps.

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dealer's hand. The player on your right leads a small diamond, on which you should immediately put up the ace second hand, in order to force the best trump with the established club suit. This will leave you the long trump for re-entry, and still another club to give your partner. In the actual game the player passed. The dealer won with the queen of diamonds, drew the losing trump, and made five tricks in spades, entirely shutting out the club suit.

One of the most important things in the management of trumps in connection with long suits is never to finesse on your partner's lead, except with ace queen. Play the best you have, and leave the finessing to him, being careful to lead him any cards that will give him a good finesse if you have them, regardless of number. With K J and others, never finesse the jack, on his lead, but play the king and return the jack, giving him a chance to take the finesse if he wants to. The same is true of A J and others; always return the jack, as the opportunity to finesse is more valuable than the possible information of number. Finessing and switching suits to catch turned-up honors is a losing game when your partner wants trumps out.

A very common error is in winning the adversary's lead of trumps when you are quite

willing that the trumps should come out. Never interfere with things when they are going your way. Take this hand, the heart king turned:

♡ A 10 3 2; ♣ K 10 8 6 5 3; ◇ A J 3.

You lead clubs, finessing on the return, which forces the ace and leaves the unguarded queen on your right. The player on your left leads the king of diamonds. If you win this trick, what are you to do next? Your second-best diamond will be worthless for re-entry, for if you lead trumps the king will certainly win and the diamond will be led through you. If the player on your left has K Q 10 he will finesse and kill your jack. The fact that your partner returned your suit immediately, shows that he cannot help you, and you must play your own hand to the best advantage, so your best chance is to preserve your re-entry cards, and let the king of diamonds win. In the actual game this was done, and the trumps were led next. The player with your hand passed the first two rounds, king and jack, winning the third and forcing. The queen of trumps was the only trick remaining for the adversaries, although they held all the spades and the Q 10 9 of diamonds.

One of the most serious errors into which a

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player can fall is in risking everything on the chance of dropping two trumps together, either by leading a losing trump from two, or by leading the best trump when it is the only one in his hand, two being out against him. A little consideration will show that if you have an established suit and only one trump left, two being out against you, you risk everything by leading the trump, but if you have no other chance to make your suit, you must take it, as if the trumps are not divided, you cannot make anything but your trump.

The most common error is when a player holds two trumps, and two are out against him. If he has a suit established, and only one of his trumps is the best, his play is very simple. Lead the master trump, and if it does not catch both the others, force with the established suit. If the best trump is against him, and he holds the second and third best, everything will depend on whether or not the man with the best trump has a forcing suit, for if he has, he will win one trump if you lead it, and force the other. Your only hope of gain is to prevent both trumps from making, either by finding them divided, or by forcing the best trump to be played on one of yours, and then getting in again to catch the other. In this, all depends on the probability that you can get in. As a general rule, it is

always safer to let the two trumps make separately when you have not the best, because yours must make also, and your suit as well. It will often happen that you will force the best, and can catch the other after you have ruffed in.

A common error with good players is in going on with the trumps just because their partner has led them, and without stopping to consider the consequences to their own hand. Very often a small trump is the only possible card of re-entry, and it would be folly to lead it.

♡ Q 7 5 3; ♣ 7; ◇ 5 2; ♠ K 10 9 8 7 2.

You lead the spade, the jack going up second hand, your partner winning with the ace and leading a small trump. The ace is played second hand, and a spade is led through you. You play the 7, and your partner takes it away from you with the queen, showing he has no more of the suit. He leads another small trump, and your queen falls to the king on your left. Winning clubs are then led, the second of which you ruff. If you now lead your only remaining trump, your hand is dead, whether your partner has the best trump or not. No matter how good your partner's diamonds may be, they are no better than your established spades, and by forcing

with that suit you are certain of making three tricks in spades, no matter who has the best trump. In the actual game, which was played in one of the matches for the Utica trophy, the player lost three tricks by leading the trump. The jack was on his left, and the established clubs forced the last trump, and the ace of diamonds was the only trick remaining, the spade suit being shut out.

It is not always advisable to go on with the trumps when you have high ones and your partner has small ones, especially if you know he can ruff a suit. If your partner has two trumps remaining, and can probably ruff a suit, let him make one of his small trumps and lead you the other. The only danger in this is, that if your partner is not a common-sense player he will think you have abandoned the trump lead and will try to force you, instead of coming back with the other trump.

The same difficulty arises when you are leading trumps and the player on your left renounces. If you try to get your partner into the lead in a plain suit, so as to come through the other hand, he may conclude that you have abandoned the trump lead, and instead of coming through with a supporting trump, he will go on with the plain suit, and let the losing trumps on your right make. Some judgment of the capacity of the partner is

needed in such situations, but you may usually trust a good player to see anything that is not very improbable.

Situations will sometimes come up which you must not expect a partner to see, simply because they are so improbable that he would not believe the evidence of his own reasoning powers. Suppose you hold A K J 10 4 3 2 of trumps, and he has the queen turned. He wins the first trick in plain suits and leads a small trump. You play the 10 and hold the trick, both adversaries following suit. If he holds four trumps it is evidently useless to lead another round, because you hold them all between you; but you must not expect your partner to see through such an improbable condition of affairs, and even at the expense of knocking your trumps together, you should go back with a small one, and make the situation perfectly clear to him.

When your partner is leading trumps, or you are anxious that he should get in to continue them, you having none, you should suspend all the rules of the game to get him into the lead. Under such circumstances it would be perfectly proper for you to lead a small card from A K Q even, or to pass a small card led, holding K Q, or A K second hand: To put up a high card second hand, when you want him to get into the lead, is finessing

against your partner, and fighting against yourself.

One of the most important things in the common-sense game is never to take the lead when you don't want it, and never to keep it when you want your partner to get it. Suppose you have ruffed a suit, and want to ruff it again, you should not lead winning cards, even from A K suits, but give your partner a chance to get in by leading him a small card. On the same principle, it is very bad policy to lead supporting cards when you want your partner to get into the lead, because they invite him to finesse and pass the trick, which is just what you don't want him to do.

♡ 7 3 2; ♣ A K Q 6 5 4 2; ◇ J 10 2.

The player on your right leads the ace of spades, and you trump it. There are two continuations open to you: To lead the high clubs, hoping to find your partner short, and so establish a cross ruff, or to lead the diamonds in the hope that he can win the trick and force you again. The odds being against his being short in clubs and yet not overtrumped, the diamond is the better play; but you must lead the small one, not the jack, because the latter would tempt him to finesse.

A very important principle in the management of trumps, when you have led from four

of them to protect an established suit, is, never to win the second round unless you can win the third also. If you win the second round and are left with two losing trumps, you cannot afford to risk another round, because even if you think you can get in again without being forced, you may be mistaken, and the adversary may pull both your trumps. If you give up one of your losing trumps on the second round, the adversary dare not lead trumps again, because your best trump would win and your suit would force, leaving you with a trump. Take the following example:

A 4 3 2; K J 8 4 3 2; A 5; 7.

You lead clubs; partner wins with ace and returns small, your finesse of the jack holding the trick. You go to trumps; partner winning with queen and returning the 9, covered by the 10. It is folly to play your ace, because you cannot risk leading another round with the whole spade suit against you. If you pass the trick, and can get in again, you can lead the winning trump and then force, and nothing but five trumps in one hand against you will stop you from making your suit.

# Self-Protection.

A very common fault among long-suit players is in failing to protect themselves. There are so many situations in which they imagine certain things must happen, but forget to protect themselves in case they do not happen. You lead a suit of K 10 7 6 3, for instance, and the jack wins second hand. You lead it again, and the queen wins second hand, the 4 and 5 having fallen from your partner, the 2 and 8 from fourth hand. Upon getting in the third time you lead the 7, imagining the player on your left will put up the ace and that the 9 will fall. But suppose he does not put up the ace, but plays the 9 instead? It would have cost you nothing to protect yourself by leading the 10. Nothing is more important than this elementary principle of playing one of the second and third-best of a suit. No matter what position at the table you occupy, or how sure you feel that such a play is unnecessary, you may be mistaken, and must protect yourself.

Here is another case, taken from a match in the inter-city tournament, in which this fail-

ure to protect yourself cost five tricks. A small club was led from K J 6 5 3 2. Second hand played the 4 and third hand trumped it, immediately leading a trump, of which he had six. The player on your right puts up the ace of trumps and leads the 8 of clubs through you, having already played the 7 to the first trick. The most natural impression would be, of course, that it was quite unnecessary to waste the K or J in covering this card, as the player on your left must play a higher card, and your partner can ruff it. In the actual game, the player passed, third hand renounced, and the six-trump hand was forced again, leaving him with three trumps only against three on his right, which enabled the adversaries to bring in all the diamonds. Had the 7 of clubs been covered, the third hand would have been forced, leaving the superiority in trumps against him, and shutting out the whole diamond suit.

A player will sometimes hold second and third-best of a suit which he feels sure his partner can ruff, and he leads a small card to give him the chance. To his surprise he cannot ruff it, and the fourth-best of the suit holds the trick. It would have cost nothing to protect himself by leading one of the second and third-best, so that in case his partner had no trumps left the command of the suit would at least have been forced out,

# Discards.

Discarding is usually considered a very important part of the defence to the long-suit game, and its difficulties have led to the invention of endless systems of arbitrary rules, which are intended to govern the discard under various conditions. All such schemes are either a waste of energy or an insult to the intelligence of the partner. There never can be an absolute rule for anything at whist, because each hand presents its own difficulties, which must be solved by the common-sense player in his own way.

As a general principle of play it is best to discard the suit which you don't want your partner to lead; but the player should be perfectly free at all times to discard according to the best interests of his hand without any fear that his partner will be tempted to do something foolish simply because a certain suit or a particular card has been discarded.

Freedom in the discard enables a player to protect himself in many situations in which one who is bound to an arbitrary system can-

not do so. Suppose your partner has led a suit, won by the player on your left, who leads trumps. You have to discard, and do not wish to give any information about your hand, so you discard your partner's suit: the top, bottom or intermediate, anything you please. This does not say which suit is your best or your worst, but simply that you prefer to keep your trump-leading adversary guessing for the present.

If you have two discards, and want to show your strong suit to your partner, you can usually do so by discarding both the others. This frequently follows a speculative lead from short trumps when your partner is able to continue them. If one suit has already been shown, especially by the adversaries, one discard will usually direct your partner to your best suit. If your best suit is known, a discard will show in which of the remaining suits you have the best chance of re-entry. A discard of your own suit, especially if established, should be a positive indication that you have a re-entry in the suit you keep, and will often show that it is not the ace, because you are keeping a guard to it.

If your partner discards the same suit twice, it will usually be found that he does not care which of the others you lead to him. Under such circumstances you should select which-

ever you are stronger in yourself, and, if you are playing for his hand, you should lead the best card in the suit, regardless of number. If your partner discards the adversaries' suit, you may be pretty sure that he wants you to play your cards without any regard to him, as he is on the defensive.

When you have a strong suit and some good trumps, it is useless to discard the suit and hug the trumps, because this involves the manifest absurdity of keeping your trumps to bring in a suit and at the same time throwing the suit away. The best plan is to ruff in at once, if your partner cannot help you, and then to force with your suit, if you are afraid to lead trumps after taking the force.

# The Short-Suit Game.

When your hand is so imperfect that it contains no suit in which you can reasonably expect to make more than two tricks, it is not a long-suit hand, although it may be useful as a complement to your partner's hand if he has a suit worth playing for.

If your hand is defective in a long suit, but contains re-entry cards or four trumps, it will usually be found the best policy to keep those cards quiet until you find out whether or not your partner has any use for them. We have already seen that a player with a chance to make a long suit should never willingly part with his re-entry cards until the time has come to use them, and we have also pointed out the importance of remembering that the defects in the leader's hand may be remedied in the partner's. Joining these two principles, it should be obvious that a player who holds cards of re-entry should not willingly part with them until he knows that they will not be needed to protect a possible long suit in his partner's hand.

To give up your trumps or re-entry cards when you have no suit to make, will usually be found to promote the adversaries' game. To lead winning cards from short suits is to establish the smaller cards of those suits against you, probably in the hands of the adversary. To exhaust the trumps without any suit to defend will probably remedy one of the most serious defects in the adversaries' hands, after which one force on you may enable them to make their hands perfect.

When your plain suits are not played as long suits, and no attempt is made to establish the smaller cards, the elements of success lie in the proper management of the high cards, especially in taking advantage of favorable positions. A knowledge of these positions leads us to distinguish between suits which it is desirable to lead, and those with which it is better to keep quiet. Short suits, or long suits played as short suits, the small cards not adding to their value, are of three kinds: Those which are strong in themselves; those which are supporting to the partner; and those which are worthless for any purpose.

All suits in which you hold two honors only, especially if they are not in sequence, and all suits in which one of your two honors is the ten, must be opened at a disadvantage, so far as winning tricks with the high cards is

concerned, and nothing can be gained by opening such suits unless the rest of the hand is strong enough to justify the player in hoping to establish and defend the smaller cards and to bring them into play. If he has no such hope, and is not strong enough to look forward to making up for the loss of tricks in the high cards by a gain in the small cards, he is foolish to open such suits, because he runs the risk of loss, with no prospect of compensating gain.

The recognition of this principle lies at the root of the difference between the long and the short-suit games. In the long-suit game the player knows that he is leading to a disadvantage, but hopes to make up for it. This is especially true of the trump suit, in which the chief object is to exhaust it, not to win tricks in it, and many tricks are undoubtedly given up in the trump suit for the sake of getting it out of the way of the plain suit in which the tricks are to be taken back.

In the short-suit game the player will not run the risk of losing tricks by injudicious openings, either in the plain suits or in the trumps, and declines to lead either of them at a disadvantage. He not only refuses to sacrifice his chances for tricks with the high cards of plain suits for problematical tricks with the small cards, but he also refuses to give up his

chances in the trump suit by leading it for no other purpose than to exhaust it. The whole object of the long-suit player is to make tricks in one suit ; the object of the short-suit player is to make tricks in all the suits.

The short-suiter divides his suits into three classes : Those in which the lead is an advantage, such as suits headed by sequences ; those in which the lead is a disadvantage, such as suits headed by single honors and fourchettes ; and those which it is better to lead to your partner than to have him lead to you.

In making his selection, he must be guided by his knowledge of the probabilities of loss and gain, and the great conundrum of modern whist is to decide whether you will lose more tricks by waiting to have suits led up to you in which you can win tricks by getting the best of the position, or by leading suits in which you cannot possibly take a trick, no matter who leads them. In the first case, you clearly hope to benefit yourself ; in the second case you run the risk of seriously injuring your partner or benefiting your adversaries. On which side does the balance of advantage lie ? In order to answer this question, it will be necessary to show the disadvantage of leading away from single honors and high cards not in sequence, and then to compare it with the disadvantage of leading weak or worthless suits.

# Single-Honor Suits.

The first principle in the management of all short or weak suits is that of defence, and the first principle of defence is not to advance to the attack, but to let the enemy come and attack you. When there are certain positions that make no difference and others that do, you should remember the general principle that when you are on the defensive you must always assume that the position which is unfavorable to you is the one that exists. Take the case of single honors, not the ace. You must not play on the supposition that your partner has all the highest honors, but must assume that the position is so unfavorable that your honor may be caught. The number of times that this single honor will win a trick will usually depend on the number of times it can be defended; that is, the number of cards that accompany it, and also upon your keeping quiet.

Under certain circumstances, this is perfectly obvious to any whist player, but under very slightly changed conditions he will be

perfectly blind to it. Suppose you hold queen and two small cards of a suit which is led through you, and that the player on your left wins with the ace. He evidently has not the king, which must be on your right or with your partner. The combination left in your hand is known as the second-best guarded, and any one will tell you that it is certainly good for a trick, bar trumping, provided you do not lead the suit. In suits which have been developed this is obvious, yet very few persons can be brought to understand that the same principle may be applied to unplayed suits if we alter the problem by substituting the probable positions of the better cards for their known or inferred positions.

If you hold a singly guarded king, it is two to one that your partner does not hold the ace of that suit, and that you will lose your king if you lead it. If your king is led through, it is an even chance that your partner wins the first trick if you don't play the king. If he does not win it, it is an even chance that the ace will have to be played third hand, which will make your king good. If your partner leads the suit to you, one adversary having to play before you, it is two to one that your king wins the first trick, because either your partner or second hand may hold the ace. If the player on your left leads the suit to

you it is a certainty that your king will win the first or the second trick, bar trumping.

Length in suit, without the addition of other honors, does not strengthen the suit a particle, and whether your king has one guard or six, the chances of saving are it practically the same, and it will always be two to one that you lose it if you lead it. If you lead a small card, you are simply leading away from the second-best guarded of a suit, and you must lose by it in the long run, although no lead is more common among those who do not understand the proper management of weak suits.

It is obvious that if a small card is led, the leader is relying on his partner to win the trick, or to play such cards as will make the king good in the leader's hand, because there is no hope of winning a trick with the small card led. If we assume the most favorable condition, that the suit shall go round three times, or that it is the trump, so that your king cannot be lost by ruffing, and calculate all the possible distributions of the ace, queen and jack, we shall find that in 1000 deals your

Partner will have no honor.....240 times
Partner will have one honor.....540 times
Partner will have two honors.....210 times
Partner will have three honors..... 10 times

In these 1000 deals there will be 3000 tricks

to play for with the honors, and you will find that with the best play on your part and the best defence on the adversaries', you always leading a small card of the suit, the number of tricks you will win will be about as follows:

| | TIMES. | TOTALS. |
|---|---|---|
| You will win no trick..... | 292 | 0 |
| You will win one trick..... | 303 | 303 |
| You will win two tricks..... | 321 | 642 |
| You will win three tricks..... | 84 | 252 |
| Totals: | 1000 | 1197 |

While you are winning these 1200 tricks, your adversaries will gather in 1800, a difference of 600 in their favor, or three to your two.

What is true of the king and small cards must be equally true of any other single honor except the ace, and in the case of the queen you and your partner will win only about 960 tricks out of 3000.

Now let us see what will happen if you do not open the suit, no matter who else does.

If the player on your left leads the suit, there will be about 12 times in 1000 that he will lead the ace, and about 250 in 1000 that his partner will play the ace on the first round. If the player on your right has A Q J, or A Q, he will finesse, and your king will win the first round. This will not happen more than about

once in twelve times. As your king must win on the second round, if not on the first, it will always be good for a trick, if the lead comes from your left.

But your partner is still to be heard from. In about 520 deals in 1000 he will get a trick in the suit, and in about 156 he will get two. This will give you and your partner a total of about 1822 tricks out of 3000, no matter what card the player on your left leads, so that he opens the suit.

If the player on your right leads, the odds are still in your favor for getting more tricks in the suit than your adversaries. It is taken for granted that in no case will you put up the king second hand on the first lead, nor on the second unless the ace is played. If the king is three times guarded, it cannot be lost so long as you refuse to play it second hand, and are not killed by being made third hand. If all the positions are examined, and the adversaries are given the benefit of every legitimate finesse, it will be found that you and your partner will get about 1644 tricks out of the 3000 to be played for, if your right hand adversary opens the suit for you.

If your partner opens the suit, your position is not so favorable ; because he will often kill your king, and will enable the adversaries to hold over him to his disadvantage. If

your partner opens the suit, you and he will get only about 1290 tricks out of 3000. This will make the grand total when you do not lead away from the single honor, the king:—

| | |
|---|---|
| If the lead comes from your left, | 1822 |
| If the lead comes from your right, | 1644 |
| If the lead comes from your partner, | 1290 |
| Total:— | 4756 |

That is, out of 9000 tricks you will get 4756 to your adversaries' 4244, a difference of 512 in your favor. Reduced to 1000 deals, this would leave you about 170. We found that if you led a suit headed by a king, the adversary got the best of it by 600 tricks. By simply not leading the suit yourself, you not only wipe out that advantage, but turn it in your own favor by 171 tricks; showing a total of 770 tricks in 3000 saved simply by not leading from a suit headed by a king.

It is obvious that if your partner were convinced of the disadvantage of leading from suits headed by cards not in sequence, many more tricks might be gained if he also would refuse to lead the suit; but in the foregoing calculations we have assumed that he did lead it, regardless of the combination he held. The same is of course true of the other players.

In plain suits the same number of tricks would of course be impossible, because the suit will not go round three times more than 158 times in 1000; but the principle of play and the proportion of the result is still about the same for the number of tricks that are made, and the losses that arise from leading suits headed by single honors are in the same ratio.

When the suit contains more than one honor, the disadvantage of leading it is equally apparent, unless the honors are the ace and king. In suits headed by A Q 10, it can be demonstrated that if the ace is led first, even if the suit goes round three times, the partners will win only 190 tricks in 100 deals. If a small card is led first, they will win 220. If the suit is led by any other player on the first round, and the player holding the double fourchette is obliged to lead it for the second, they will make 233. But if the suit is led twice by any other player the partners will make 254 tricks in it, which shows a difference of 64 tricks in 100 deals between leading the best card of a double fourchette, and not leading it at all.

In this combination, you hold a certain trick in the suit, the ace; but in all weaker combinations of high cards which are not in sequence, such as K J, K 10, and Q 10, you

have no such advantage, and the losses that arise simply from leading such suits are even greater than in leading from suits headed by the major tenace.

The most unfortunate leads are those from cards not in sequence in plain suits in which your partner turns out to have nothing at all. If you lead from a suit headed by a single honor, not the ace, or two honors not in sequence, and find your partner with nothing higher than a 9, you will be very lucky if you ever get a trick out of the suit yourself. The most favorable position with any combination of high cards not in sequence, is to be the last player on the trick, especially if you hold a fourchette. The next best position is to be third hand, with only one adversary to play after you.

# Worthless Suits.

If you hold a sequence of winning cards in a suit, such as A K Q, your hand is good for three tricks, bar trumping, no matter who leads the suit. You do not care whether you lead the suit yourself, whether your partner leads it to you, or whether it is led up to you or through you. There is no advantage in your position, and nothing that your partner could do would be of any material assistance to you.

If your cards are not in the best, but still in sequence, the lead is only a slight advantage, and only when partner holds the best card of the suit, and can pass your leading cards. The best example of this is when you hold Q J 10, your partner holding the A over the K on your left.

These considerations lead us to three conclusions: 1. If you have a sequence of winning cards in any suit, it does not matter much what your partner does. 2. If you have high cards which are not in sequence, it is better for your partner to lead the suit to

you than for you to lead it yourself. 3. If you have nothing in a suit it is important that your partner should be prevented from leading that suit to you, and the only way to prevent that is for you to lead the suit to him.

We have settled that the lead from sequence is an advantage; that the lead from cards not in sequence is a disadvantage; and that the lead from single honors is the worst of all; but we have still to examine the result of leading suits in which you hold nothing at all. So far as we have gone, we have found that it is good policy to lead from sequences of winning cards, but bad policy to lead from suits in which your tricks are only problematical. How about leading suits in which there is no problem, and in which you could not win a trick under any circumstances?

There are two great advantages in leading weak suits, that is to say, suits in which it is very improbable that you can ever take a trick. The first is that you avoid disadvantageous leads from other suits. The second is that you prevent your partner from leading suits in which you have nothing. There is also a third advantage, giving partner opportunities for finesse.

In order to agree with the first proposition: that to lead from a suit in which you cannot expect to take a trick must be better than a

lead from a suit in which you have some hopes of a trick, you must be satisfied that it is a losing game to lead from suits headed by single honors; this we have attempted to demonstrate.

In order to agree with the second proposition; you must be satisfied that it is better for a player to be third hand than to be the leader in a suit in which his partner has nothing. Some persons might think this was self-evident, but it is not.

The example that will immediately spring to the mind of an experienced whist player is that of third hand holding king and small cards of a suit which his partner leads to him, holding nothing. This is one of the stock arguments against leading weak suits; that if third hand holds the king it is killed; but if any one else leads the suit the king wins a trick. It is a pity to dispel this long-cherished illusion; but the fact is that exactly the contrary is the case. If your partner has no possible trick in the suit, and yet leads it, your king will win exactly half the time, because the ace is just as likely to be on one side of you as on the other. If the suit is led by the player on your right, your king will never win a trick on the first round, and it will never win a trick on the second round either unless your adversaries have been foolish enough to

place themselves at a disadvantage by leading from fourchettes or single honors. At the best it will win only once in six times on the second round, and it is very rarely that it will live to take a trick on the third round; partly because the adversaries will discover that you have it, and finesse against you ; and partly because in the great majority of cases the third round of the suit will be trumped.

If the player on your left leads the suit, the king must of course win the first or second trick ; but if he knows the disadvantage of leading from single honors, and honors not in sequence, he will never lead the suit up to you, and your king will never make, except when Q J 10 are on your left, and the ace on your right.

This brings us to the question of the proper card to lead from weak suits and the proper play of the third hand when such a suit is led.

As it is important to give the partner a finesse if possible, and imperative to give him a warning, the top card of a weak suit should always be led, unless that card may be good for a trick, such as an ace or king, or a doubly guarded queen. If the card is not high enough to warn him, being lower than an eight, for instance, the cards that fall on the first round will usually show him that you cannot hold two honors in the suit. He may

also be able to place a smaller card in your hand, which will show him that you have not led the lowest of a strong suit.

The best leads from short suits are supporting cards in sequence, such as Q J 10; three-card suits headed by Q J, J 10, or 10 9. The best two-card suits are those headed by some card from the queen to the eight. Three-card suits not headed by the ten at least, should never be led, because such suits neither offer the partner a finesse nor give you an opportunity of ruffing them on the third round. If you have nothing but three-card suits you cannot ruff anything, and the best defensive lead will usually be found to be the trump, which will at least have the advantage of retaining your partner's confidence that you will never lead from a weak suit of more than two cards in which you can accomplish nothing. The importance of this principle of leading suits which are as short as possible will be more evident when we come to discuss the play of the third hand in finesse, and in holding up the command of weak suits led to him by his partner.

Whenever you have opened a weak suit from the top, always play it down, following with the next higher card, whether in leading, in following suit, or in discarding. An exception may be made when the second-best

card may be good for a trick, such as a jack guarded when the queen has forced the king.

Many persons make the mistake of leading winning cards instead of supporting cards from weak suits. They will not lead a ten from ten and another for fear of establishing the suit in the hands of the adversary, but they will lead an ace from ace and four small without stopping to think that this is just as likely to clear a suit for the adversary as a ten lead would be.

# Leading up to Strength.

The great objection made to the lead of a weak suit is that you are liable to lead right up to strength in hand of your right hand adversary, and that the weaker the suit you lead, the greater the chance that he is strong in it. This sounds well, but careful investigation will usually show that it is a fallacy, like many other generally received things in whist.

We have already seen that the stronger you are in a suit, especially if you have a sequence in it, the less difference it makes to you where the lead comes from, and the less advantageous it is to you to have it come from any particular quarter instead of from another, even from your left. This being so, if the player on your right has a very strong suit, headed, let us say, by A K Q, or K Q J, you do not give him the slightest advantage by leading the suit up to him. If he has the tenace, A Q, you do not give him any advantage that he would not have had in any case if you have nothing in the suit, provided he

understands how to manage tenace suits. He will not lead such a suit himself, and if his partner leads it he will finesse, and it should be obvious that the finesse must be successful if you have nothing.

If the player on your right has tenace, your partner cannot have anything but honors which are not in sequence, and if he leads away from them he places himself at a serious disadvantage, which you will warn him against by leading the suit yourself. If you do not lead it, and he is not warned, and leads, the trick will probably be won by the player on your left, who will at once discover that his partner holds tenace over your partner; information that he will proceed to take advantage of immediately, and information, it should be observed, that he would not have been possessed of, nor in the position to take advantage of, had you opened the suit first.

Observation and analysis of a great number of hands has led to the conclusion that the true secret of the losses from leading weak suits is that such a lead often prevents the fourth hand from playing as badly as he is accustomed to play. Take the case of one who has never studied the value of tenace, or who does not realize the importance of avoiding the lead from tenace suits. He is just as likely as not to lead away from a tenace, and

if he has five cards he will probably make the worst lead of all, and begin with the ace.

For the sake of argument we will assume that such a lead is admitted to be bad, and is bound to lose in the long run. By leading such a suit up to such a player you prevent him from playing badly, because you force him to make the best use of his tenace, and prevent him from leading away from it. In other words, it is not so much that your lead of the weak suit will lose tricks as it is that the lead may prevent a badly taught player from giving them to you.

The greatest advantage you can give an adversary by leading a weak suit up to him is when his only honor is the king because you are certain to make the king good, either on that trick or the next. At the first sight this seems to be a strong point against the weak lead, but let us look into the matter a little. In the first place, how many times in a hundred deals will the player hold only one honor, the king, when you have nothing? And if he has it, what advantage do you give him that he would not have in any case? We must assume that he is a good player, which will eliminate the chance of his leading away from his king, and so giving you tricks. If he is a player who will lead away from single honors, you prevent him from making that

mistake, by practically forcing him to play better than he knows, and so compelling him to get the full benefit of the combination he holds. But if he will not give you tricks by bad leading, what additional advantage do you give him? The remaining honors may be distributed in eight different ways, as follows, you being A in every case, with no honor, leading up to Z who holds the king;—

| No. | A | Y | B | Z |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | – | A Q J | – | K |
| 2 | – | A Q | J | K |
| 3 | – | A J | Q | K |
| 4 | – | A | Q J | K |
| 5 | – | Q J | A | K |
| 6 | – | Q | A J | K |
| 7 | – | J | A Q | K |
| 8 | – | – | A Q J | K |

These distributions are not equally probable, any of them being three times as likely as the first and the last. Just look these positions over, and see what the positions are in which you would make more by not leading the suit if you were sure that Z would never lead it. How many times will Z lose his king just because you do not lead the suit up to him? If you are honest with yourself you will have to confess that the only circumstances under which he could lose his king if the suit went round twice without trumping, would be when

he was foolish enough to lead the suit himself.

If we take the case of leading up to a queen, the result is exactly the same if the player with the queen has two guards to it, and will not lead the suit himself. Look at the following distributions of the cards, and see if there is any case in which the queen will not make equally whether you lead the suit up to it or not.

| No. | A | Y | B | Z |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | – | A K J | – | Q |
| 2 | – | A K | J | Q |
| 3 | – | A J | K | Q |
| 4 | – | K J | A | Q |
| 5 | – | A | K J | Q |
| 6 | – | K | A J | Q |
| 7 | – | J | A K | Q |
| 8 | – | – | A K J | Q |

# Leading Aces.

There is an absolute trick-losing element in leading the aces of plain suits; because such a lead informs the table that the king is good for the second trick. At first sight this may not appear to be of much importance, as it affects only the second hand, but the tricks lost by it run into large figures in the course of time.

If you lead the ace with four others of the same suit in your hand, you must remember that it is impossible for the suit to go round three times, and that it is two to one against your partner being the one to trump the third round. The suit will go round twice about six times in ten, and your play should be so adjusted as to get those two tricks if you can. If you go reaching after three tricks you are playing against probability, and if you play so that the adversaries will be more likely to get one of the two tricks than you will, you are playing against yourself.

Your chances for two tricks in a suit in which you have only the ace, no matter how

many small cards, are twofold. In the first place your partner may have the king. This will happen just 336 times in 1008, and it would not matter whether you began with the ace or a small card. But if you begin with the ace, there are 672 times that the adversaries will hold the king, and no matter which of them holds it he will put it on the second round, because he knows it is good. But if you begin with a small card there are only 84 times in these 672 that the player on your left would put up the king, and these would be when he held both king and queen, or king, queen, jack. His partner will hold the king 336 times, which leaves 252 in which the king would be against you but not played to the first trick. These 252 positions are as follows, you being A and your partner B.

| A | Y | B | Z | TIMES IN 1008 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | K J | Q | – | 36 |
| A | K J | – | Q | 36 |
| A | K | Q J | – | 36 |
| A | K | – | Q J | 36 |
| A | K | Q | J | 54 |
| A | K | J | Q | 54 |
| | | | | 252 |

If these six positions are examined, it will be evident that in exactly half of them your partner will get the first trick if you begin with a low card, and you will get the second

with the ace; but in not a single one of them would you get the second trick if you led the ace first, because the player on your left would know his king was good, and your partner could not get a trick with the queen unless the suit went round three times, and this is impossible if you held five originally. But if you begin with the small card there are 126 cases in which it will be your adversary that will be unable to get a trick unless the suit goes round three times. For this, it must be noticed, he has a chance, as his partner would not trump his king; but you have no such chance, as it must be an adversary that is short of the suit if your partner holds the queen until the third round.

If we sum up the whole matter, it would appear that out of 1008 times that your only honor in a plain suit is the ace, and that the suit goes round twice, there are only 336 times that you will get two tricks if you begin with the ace, and these are the times that your partner has the king. But if you begin with the small cards there are 462 chances for you to get the first two tricks; the 336 that your partner has the king, and the 126 that your partner will have the queen, and the king not being played second hand on the first round.

Dr. Pole investigated this lead both mathe-

matically and experimentally, many years ago, and found that in 200 deals one trick would be made 96 times by leading ace first ; and 84 times only by leading a small card first. His results have been widely quoted, but it has never been clearly enough stated that his experiments were as to saving or losing the ace itself, and took no account of the partner's possibilities as a trick-winner. The point that all writers on this much-mooted question have overlooked, and which has been so strongly insisted on by the N. Y. SUN, in its descriptions of the common-sense game, is that while it may be better to lead the small card than to begin with the ace, it is better still not to lead the suit at all, except as a resource, in hands which offer no good supporting card lead from a short suit.

# The Third Hand.

In the long-suit game, the general principles of play for the third hand are comparatively simple. The object is to establish the suit, and as the original leader is supposed to be long in it the best policy for the third hand is to put up his best cards in the hope of catching the intermediate cards held by the adversaries. Unless the leader and his partner hold A K Q between them, or can catch the queen in two leads, it is obviously impossible to make more than two tricks in the suit without a finesse of some kind, but except in the case of ace queen in third hand, this finesse should always be left to the player who is strong in the suit, the original leader. Third hand should never finesse the jack from ace jack or king jack, but should invariably play the higher card and return the jack, regardless of number, so as to give the original leader the finesse. It can be demonstrated that this play will win more tricks in the long run than either the finesse by third hand or the return of a small card when holding jack and two others.

The return of the higher of only two small cards remaining, so as to support the partner; leading back one of the second and third-best, and always returning the ace before opening another suit unless to lead trumps, are principles too well known to need repetition in a work of this kind. But the play of the third hand on supporting cards is quite another story, because the conditions are exactly reversed, and it is the third hand that is supposed to be stronger in the suit and to do all the finessing.

The fewer cards the leader holds in the suit the better for you if you are going to finesse, because the success of finesse in plain suits depends very largely on the number of times that the suit will go round without affording to the adversaries an opportunity to trump the high cards which you hold up in finessing. If you are not going to finesse, the longer the suit in your partner's hand the better it will be for both of you, because if he has five or six, it is extremely likely that one adversary will be very short, which will increase the chances of your catching a high card if you do not finesse. Another point is that it is very improbable that the adversaries can make more than one or two tricks in such a suit, because there are so few cards left of it to distribute between them.

These considerations naturally suggest two entirely different systems of managing weak suits, and the leader's selection must depend on his confidence in his partner. If the third hand knows little or nothing of the principles of finessing, and will go right up with the best card he holds third hand, it is folly to lead him supporting cards, and nothing can be worse than to lead him a short suit. If you lead him a suit in which you have nothing yourself, not even length, and he is going to give up the best card he has in it on the first round, you are simply promoting the value of all the cards that the adversaries hold in that suit, and establishing it for them unless your partner has both ace and king, or an ace-queen finesse, in which case it does not matter much what you do.

For the same reasons it is useless to lead to such a partner the top of a long weak suit. If you have five cards to the ten, there is nothing to be gained by leading him the ten if he is going to put on his best card in any case, regardless of second hand's play. The only possible use of supporting cards is to give partner a finesse, and if the partner will not take the finesse, the supporting card is simply wasted, and it would be much better to keep it on the chance of getting a trick with it later on.

If, on the contrary, partner is one of those

that will finesse, and finesse deeply and often, it is bad policy to lead him a supporting card from the top of a long suit, because you are inviting him to hold up high cards which will probably be lost through being trumped, all finesse being disadvantageous in plain suits in which the adversaries are short.

There are three principal positions for the third hand: When he holds two high cards in sequence, when he holds fourchettes, and when he holds single honors. In each of these his play must be governed by two considerations: self-protection, and the desirability of having the lead himself or of allowing it to come from the right or left for the next trick. If you are weak in the other suits, and the second hand covers a supporting card led, it will often be advantageous to let that player open another suit to possible strength in your partner's hand. The reverse of this would be to have the lead come from the left, through the possible strength to your weakness. If you are strong, especially if you hold fourchettes in the other suits, it will be an advantage to have the next lead come from your left, and you should play accordingly. This consideration of the position of the next lead will constantly modify your play when you hold certain combinations in suits in which your partner leads supporting cards.

With two honors in sequence, such as A K, K Q, Q J, or J 10, one of these cards should be played unless you have a finesse against two cards being in one hand against you, and it should always be remembered that the odds against such a combination are three to one. With king queen on a ten led and not covered by second hand, the finesse is against both ace and jack being on your left. If it is desirable to have the next lead come from your left, take the finesse; otherwise play the queen.

With ace and king, cover everything but a queen, but do not lead back the ace. It is folly to pass a jack or ten with both ace and king in your hand unless you are strong enough to play for more than two tricks in the suit. With A K J and small, do not make the common mistake of winning the trick just to go on with the suit and give your partner discards unless you are strong enough to manage the hand yourself, because that queen may be a feeler, and if it is allowed to win, your partner may have a great game behind it which you will spoil if you take the lead away from him. Many good scores are lost by players taking the lead when they do not particularly want it.

With queen jack and others, cover anything but a ten led, so as to force ace or king on your left and leave yourself with the second-

best guarded. With the jack ten and others, cover anything but a nine.

With single honors, unless you want the lead, and are quite sure you know what you are doing, pass everything, especially if the second hand covers. When a jack is led, covered second hand by the queen, many players make the mistake of putting on the king, which is about the only way to lose it. If second hand is a good player he cannot hold the ace and finesse against his partner by putting on the queen, so the ace must be behind you, and unless you have only one guard to the king or have the ten or nine with it, you should never put on the king third hand under such circumstances.

With the ace, pass always, unless you want the lead. This retains the command of the suit in which your partner warns you he has nothing, and which must therefore be the adversaries'. If the second hand covers the card led and you pass it, he will have to do one of two things: open a new suit to your partner's possible strength, or continue the one opened, upon which you can put up the ace and lead a third round in the full assurance that your partner can ruff it, or he may get a discard on your ace, showing in which of the unplayed suits he is stronger.

With queen and others, unless you have a

fourchette, perfect or imperfect, over the card with which the second hand covers, pass the trick always. Both king and ace cannot be on your right and you must lose the queen if you put it on.

With fourchettes, such as ace queen, king jack, or queen ten, take the finesse always unless you are anxious for the lead, in which case you may make an exception in the case of king jack and others. Even if you lose your king you remain with the second-best guarded.

With imperfect fourchettes, ace jack and king ten, always take the finesse with king ten and always pass the trick altogether with ace jack, even if second hand covers, because that is the only way to retain the command of the suit and get two tricks out of it at the same time. More tricks are probably lost by bad management of the ace-jack combination in third hand on a supporting card led than in any other position at the whist table.

If you have ace jack and small and second hand passes such a card as an eight or nine, it may be fairly assumed that he has not both king and queen, although there are some players who do not cover with that combination. If both these cards are not on your right, either one of them may be there, or on your left, or both of them may be on your

left. These positions are not equally probable, the odds being three to one against both cards being in one hand.

It is evident from this that if second hand does not cover, the card led will not win the first trick; but it is still more certain that your jack will not win it; nor will it win the second and very seldom the third if you play the ace on the first round. The point to observe is, that without a finesse of some kind the ace is the only possible trick in the suit, and that if the jack is played to the first trick it is thrown away; while if the ace is played, the suit is practically abandoned to the adversaries. If the second hand plays either king or queen, and you have more than three cards in the suit, it is perhaps safer to play the ace, and hope for a trick with the second-best guarded.

If the ace is not played to the first round, there are two things to consider: the risk of losing it by its being trumped, and the advisability of taking the finesse of the jack on the second round.

As to the risk of losing both ace and jack by the suit being ruffed, which is the thing most players are afraid of, everything depends on the number of cards held by the original leader. If you have three and he had two only, the remainder of the suit may be dis-

tributed in five different ways and still go round twice, and there are only four distributions of the suit which will allow the adversaries to trump the first or second round. If they can ruff the first round, your ace is gone in any case. The probability of these distributions is 853 to 40, and those are the odds that the suit will go round twice at least. Out of these 893 distributions there are 741 in which the suit will go round three times, which is the most favorable condition for successful finessing. It is therefore evident that the odds are about seven to one against your losing your ace, even if you keep it up until the third round.

Although you may start out with this theory as a general principle of play, you will of course be ready to depart from it if the fall of the cards shows that the finesse would be absurd. If the second hand has none of the suit, for instance, and passes the doubtful trick, to hold up the ace would be folly. If second hand plays a nine on a ten, the finesse would be very doubtful if second hand is a good player, for he cannot have an honor and the nine only, or he would cover.

If either you or your partner have more cards in the suit, your chances are not quite so good. If you have four, for instance, the suit will fail to go round twice about 13 times

in 100, but it does not follow that the adversary will trump it every time, and even if he does, it does not follow that you will lose your ace, for his partner must be very long in the suit, and your ace will prove a great stopper and the force may break up the player taking it.

If you play the ace the first round you must assume that it is the only trick you will get in the suit; but if you do not play it, you must have the courage to hold it up and finesse the jack on the second round also, or you surrender the advantage you have gained. There are only six cases out of twenty-four in which the jack will not win the second round of the suit, no matter who leads it, provided you remember the golden rule of tenace play and do not lead the suit yourself.

If you will balance up the account, you will find that if you play the ace the first time you will get just 100 tricks in 100 deals, neither more nor less. Playing the small card the first time, finessing the jack the second you will get 141 even if the adversaries never pass a trick. In actual play you will find that the finesse will yield about 166 tricks in 100 deals.

With the king jack and small third hand, the supporting card led being anything below a ten, the jack should always be played unless the second hand puts up the ace or queen.

The whole question depends upon the position of these two cards, ace and queen, and there are four distributions possible, which are as follows, with the number of times they will occur in 1000, the third hand being B :

| No | A | Y | B | Z, | Times. | Playing King. | Finessing. Jack. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | – | A Q | K J | – | 214 | 214 | 428 |
| 2 | – | – | K J | A Q | 214 | —— | —— |
| 3 | – | A | K J | Q | 286 | 286 | 286 |
| 4 | – | Q | K J | A | 286 | 286 | 286 |
| | | | | Totals : | 1000 | 786 | 1000 |

The only position which makes a difference is the first, and agreeably to the general principles of finesse we must always assume that it is the one that exists. If your partner has two of the suit only, and you have three, the chances for the suit to go round three times are about seven out of eight, which will give you plenty of room to finesse. If the king is played to the first round, that is the only possible trick in the suit, unless the adversaries are very bad players, and make your jack good by leading through your partner's weakness up to your strength; but we must not calculate on bad play to give us tricks. If the jack is finessed in every instance it will make no difference except in the first position, in which it will gain 214 tricks in 1000 deals.

So that while we found it to be bad policy to finesse the jack from king jack and small with a long suit player for a partner, exactly the contrary is the case when the partner leads the top of nothing. The chief lesson to be learned from this difference is the importance of knowing when it is the top of nothing that is led, as distinguished from the bottom of a long suit containing honors, and the importance of third hand's knowing the difference in his play required by the difference in the circumstances.

It cannot be too strongly impressed on the student that the lead itself is seldom or never responsible for the loss of tricks; it is always the failure of the third hand to adapt himself to the true circumstances of the case. The great trouble with most persons who play, or think they play, supporting cards, is that their partners don't know how to follow out the theory, and throw away the advantages arising from the position. Then they condemn the "short-suit game," as they call it, and say it is all nonsense.

# The Second Hand.

There are two very common mistakes made by modern players in handling certain combinations of high cards second hand. The first and most important is in finessing against their partners, and the second is in failing to protect themselves.

In the long-suit game, playing on small cards led, the second hand should always play in the smallest card of any combination of high cards from which he would lead a high card, if he had to lead the suit. This rule should be extended to ace and four others, even if one is the queen, and the ace should always be put on, because modern players will not open a small card from a suit of less than five cards, and it is impossible for such a suit to go round twice if you have five also. The same is true of king and four small, and many tricks may be saved by putting up the king second hand on a small card led, if the player has a good lead for the second trick. The only danger is that your partner's ace may fall on your king.

The second hand should always cover supporting cards if he holds a fourchette, perfect or imperfect; but it is not worth while to cover with an imperfect fourchette smaller than queen nine over a jack led. The third hand will not finesse if he holds ace king, and if he does not hold both, your partner can win the trick without your assistance.

If second hand holds ace queen and others, and a jack is led, the ace should be played every time, there still being a chance for the queen, which is the second best guarded, to win a trick. To put the queen on the jack is to finesse against your partner, because the king must be behind you. If second hand holds queen jack and a ten is led, it should be covered, because the odds are against third hand holding both ace and king, and if he has king only he must either allow your jack to win or sacrifice his king to your partner's ace. If he has the ace, he must allow jack to win or abandon the command of the suit to yourself and your partner.

With single honors second hand, either on the first or second round of the suit, never finesse against your partner if you know the higher card is behind you, because your cards may fall together. If you have nothing better than a supporting card second hand, such as the ten, and are short in the suit, always put

it on; it may save valuable cards in your partner's hand. With one honor and one small card, cover all supporting leads, unless your honor is the ace. The play of the higher card first will warn your partner that you have done all you can to protect him in the suit.

Many players extend this principle of playing weak suits down to all cases in which they hold two cards only, and are unable to hope for a trick in the suit. If such conventions as the trump signal are not used, there can be no mistaking the object of the play, and any common-sense partner can see that it is intended as a warning. When two partners play down in this manner, if the suit is led again, the weaker trump hand should take the force, and the player that passes should be credited with at least four trumps. Some players extend this principle to cards that win the trick, and will play ace and lead king to show they are out of the suit, and willing to ruff the third round.

If the adversaries attempt to catch any good cards in your hand by playing supporting cards through you, make them catch them; never give them up. Suppose you hold king and small cards and the player on your right leads through you with queen and jack. Don't give up your king until it is the only card left, or your cards become fourchette, because it is

always possible that the third hand, even if he holds the ace, may not have enough guards to it to pass two rounds, and will have to free your king.

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There are, of course, many thousands of interesting positions which will arise in playing the common-sense game, which it is impossible even to touch upon in a work of this kind. The general principles here laid down are based upon playing in accordance with probability, instead of striving after the impossible. There are plays that will win in certain hands, but if they will not win in the majority they must be unsound, and if persisted in they must lose.

The solid principles of whist, if mastered and followed faithfully, are strong enough to win against any system of arbitrary conventions, especially when the meaning of those conventions is known to the adversaries. Instead of trying to play by rule of thumb and depending on a partner's direction, the student should regard every hand as a problem in itself, and the finding of the proper solution will then be a pleasant intellectual exercise instead of a laborious attempt to follow out a mechanical routine.